

France offers JD12.48m in soft loan, grant to Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The French government is extending JD 11.44 million in soft loans and JD 1.04 million in grants to Jordan under a protocol finalised in Paris last month, a French diplomat said Sunday.

Michel Duger, commercial counsellor at the French embassy here, said the protocol, which has to be approved by the Jordanian government before it takes effect, covered the year 1994.

"It was finalised at the last minute," said Mr. Duger, who attended the discussions in Paris in mid-December between Jordanian and French officials that led to the accord. The agreement has already secured the approval of the French government, he added.

According to Mr. Duger, the protocol involves 88 million French francs (JD 11.44 million) in loans repayable over a period of 20 years plus 10 years of grace in 40 half-year instalments carrying a one per cent interest.

"The net grant impact of the loan is about 70 per cent" taking into consideration the depreciation of currency over three decades, said Mr. Duger. A similar accord for fiscal 1993 involved 85 million francs (JD 11 million) a repayment period of 10 years with 10 years grace.

he noted.

The loan will be used to finance infrastructure projects in Jordan in French goods and services: 55 million francs (JD 7.15 million) to the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) to set up a new exchange in Tla Al Ali, 30 million francs (JD 3.9 million) for upgrading the water pipeline network in Irbid and the rest for the Meteorological Department and civil aviation.

The use of the aid in commercial sectors has to be governed by the guidelines of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The accord also includes an eight million franc (JD 1.04 million) grant which will be used to finance studies in various sectors in Jordan, Mr. Duger told the Jordan Times.

The Paris discussions were headed on the Jordanian side by Ministry of Planning Secretary-General Nabil Ammarin and on the French side by Ludwig Del Montille, a senior French economy ministry official.

Also discussed during the meeting was French assistance to Jordan during fiscal year 1995. While no definite figures were mentioned, the Jordanian side sought to increase the amount of the grant part of the aid and softer terms for the loan part; a copy of the minutes of the meeting was published in the local press, he said.

Jordan also requested that it be allowed more flexibility in the allocation and utilisation of assistance rather than confining its options by incorporating conditions in the protocol, the minutes said.

The French side promised to study the Jordanian request and also wanted to know what specific sectors Jordan wanted to allocate the 1995 aid to, the report said.

The Jordanian side responded by noting that the Kingdom had submitted 121 national and regional projects, estimated to cost about \$18 billion, at the Oct. 30-Nov. 1 economic conference held in Casablanca and that the Kingdom would like to use some of the aid in the water, transport and telecommunication sectors.

Jordanian-French discussions also involved direct French loans to the Jordanian Treasury, under soft terms, to be used for onward lending to the Kingdom's private sector on the same terms and projects to encourage French investments in Jordan.

The signing of the 1994 protocol followed a debt relief agreement under which France rescheduled about \$200 million of Jordan's debts and agreed to swap \$100 million for investments in the Kingdom.

It was not immediately known when Amman and Paris would finalise the 1995 protocol.

Abdul Meguid: No summit

DUBAI (Agencies) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid, who arrived here Sunday on the last leg of a Gulf tour, has failed to win support for holding an Arab summit next month.

Dr. Abdul Meguid ruled out the possibility of holding a summit of the 22-member league that he had predicted, when he left Cairo last week, would convene in February.

He told a press conference in Riyadh late Saturday that any reconciliation between Arab countries still deeply divided over the 1991 Gulf war was "dependent on Iraq applying all the U.N. Security Council resolutions."

An initiative launched in March 1993 to try to heal the rifts in the Arab World had only received the backing of 14 out of the league members. "The others have their own approach," Dr. Abdul Meguid added, without elaborating.

Arab countries were split over the intervention of a U.S.-led coalition after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Dr. Abdul Meguid started his tour in Kuwait on Monday before travelling on to Saudi Arabia where he met Saturday with the foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal.

He said his current tour had not been designed to prepare for an Arab summit. The last one was held in August 1990, just days after the Iraqi invasion.

Dr. Abdul Meguid was to open an economic forum in Dubai, a member of the UAE federation on Monday. He is also to hold talks with UAE leaders during his five-day visit.

In his Riyadh comments, Dr. Abdul Meguid told Iraq not to use a policy of force or pressure in its dispute with

the UAE over three strategic Gulf islands.

"If Iran uses a policy of force and pressure, I don't think this is in Iran's interests," Dr. Abdul Meguid said.

He said the Arab League fully supported the UAE in the dispute and its call on Iran to refer the issue to the International Court of Justice.

Earlier on Saturday, the Arab League's assistant secretary-general, Adnan Omran, said in remarks made in Cairo that he regretted Iran's inauguration of a courthouse on the Gulf island of Abu Musa, which is at the centre of the territorial row.

"The new Iranian action is extremely regrettable because it embodies the illegal aggression Iran undertook in 1971 by occupying the three islands that belong to the emirates," he told reporters.

European assistance to help Jordan's Development and Employment Fund

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The European Commission is extending JD 3.36 million to help the programmes of the Development Fund (DEF) and has signed an accord under which a German agency would offer technical assistance to the programmes.

Yves Gazzo, head of the delegation of the European Commission in Amman, said the assistance of four million European currency units (ECUs) — about JD 3.36 million is part of aid allocated under a 1992-96 protocol signed by the commission and the Kingdom.

Mr. Gazzo said three million ECUs of the amount would be in the form of direct grant and one million ECUs in soft loan.

Under the accord signed last week, GTZ, a German agency for technical cooperation, would offer technical assistance to DEF programmes that would help small-scale enterprises that create job opportunities.

The accord allocates European Commission financing of 1.6 million ECUs (JD 1.34 million) for the GTZ assistance, which will involve close studies of the DEF program-

mes and evaluation of proposed projects, Mr. Gazzo told the Jordan Times.

The rest of the assistance amount — 2.4 million ECUs (JD 2.2 million) — would be used by the DEF to help set up and run approved businesses under its programmes.

"The orientation of the assistance is towards creating job opportunities and GTZ will help evaluate and process applications from individuals for help from the DEF," Mr. Gazzo said.

The fourth European Commission-Jordan protocol involves 126 million ECUs (JD 115.5 million) — 80 million ECUs (JD 67.04 million) in the form of loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB), 44 million ECUs (JD 36.97 million) in grants and two million ECUs (JD 1.676 million) in contribution to risk capital for enterprises.

More than two-thirds of the protocol amount have already been allocated for various projects in water supply and distribution, rehabilitation of roads and telecommunications.

The protocol identifies the priority areas for the loan element of the total amount as: 40 per cent for the water sector, 20 per cent for small

and medium-scale industry, 30 per cent for productive infrastructure which can cover roads, communications, energy etc, and 10 per cent for small-scale agriculture.

In addition to the assistance through the fourth protocol, the European Union has also given Jordan 30 million ECUs (JD 26.2 million) to support the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme. This could be used to help the Kingdom attain a better balance of payments.

The European Commission manages programmes financed by its own budget, which is separate from the bilateral arrangements that EU member countries may have with the individual governments in the region.

The Jordanian government has approved a European Union request to set up a permanent office in Amman to follow up the work of the regional groups working on development. The office will liaise between the EU and the governments in the Middle East region.

The European Union is considering a proposal to set up a fund to help finance projects in the countries involved in the Middle East peace process. Jordan is expected to be among the first to benefit from the fund.

Iran, Russia in \$800m nuclear deal

NICOSIA (R) — Russia has agreed to complete work on a nuclear power plant on Iran's Gulf coast in a deal worth \$800 million, the plant's acting director said.

Two German firms began work on the Bushehr plant in 1974, before Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution. The project was halted and the plant was heavily damaged by bombing raids during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

"The Iranian side entered into an accord with Russia worth \$800 million to complete the project and Moscow agreed to complete the first unit of the nuclear power plant within four years," acting director Kazem Khabir told reporters.

He made the remarks, carried by Iran Television and monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, during a tour of the plant, 750 kilometres south of Tehran, on Saturday.

Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov, who arrived in Iran on Thursday, earlier told Tehran

newspapers that a deal to finish the plant's first unit would be signed soon.

Mr. Khabir said: "Ninety per cent of the construction work and 60 per cent of the equipment and machinery installation at the plant's first unit, with a capacity of 1,300 megawatts, were completed by the German contractor."

He also said the Germans completed 50 per cent of the construction work on the plant's second unit, which he described as being "designed exclusively for power generation."

Mr. Mikhailov's visit coincided with a New York Times report quoting U.S. and Israeli officials as saying they believed Iran was much closer to producing nuclear weapons than previously thought, maybe within five years.

Tehran's United Nations mission, in a statement carried by the official Iranian news agency IRNA, described the report as "a dramatic, though not un-

usual, distortion of facts."

"Those American and Israeli officials who used the Times to sublimate their mischievous political agenda know very well that Iran does not, and will not, in light of its own national interest, engage in a nuclear weapon programme," it said.

Iran has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The statement said the IAEA had inspected Iran's "peaceful nuclear facilities" in November 1993 and found them in full compliance with its safeguards accord.

It was not immediately clear if Russia had discussed the Iranian nuclear plant deal with the United States, which regards Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and has worked hard to isolate it.

After a U.S.-Russian summit in Washington in September, President Boris Yeltsin publicly acknowledged a private commitment to end arms sales to Iran.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UAE missionary hospital to close down

DUBAI (R) — One of the two hospitals run by Christian missionaries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is closing down after 40 years because of staffing difficulties, local newspapers reported on Sunday. "God did not send us a replacement doctor so we decided perhaps it was better for us to give up and wind up our activities here," Sarah Hosman, Hospital Director Gordon Draycott was quoted as saying. He said a two-year search for a replacement for an Australian doctor who served in the UAE for 10 years failed. "The doctor had to be more dedicated to service mankind than monetary gains," he added. Mr. Draycott said the hospital was first established in 1953 by two American women who turned it over to other missionaries after they became too old. The other missionary hospital is at Al 'Ain in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Fireworks, lambs slaughtered for Hariri's return

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri returned home Saturday from a heart operation in the United States to a welcome marked by fireworks and the slaughtering of lambs. A radio station said dozens of anxious listeners called in fearing the explosions signalled the outbreak of fresh violence in Lebanon, which is still licking the wounds of a 15-year war. But the thuds were caused by fireworks approved by the Interior Ministry for the return of 50-year-old Hariri, who was met at the airport by well-wishers, including top government officials.

Hoar raps Gulf Arabs on defence effort

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Gulf Arab states have failed since the 1991 Gulf war to develop a common defence despite the potential threat from Iran and Iraq, a former U.S. military commander for the region said Saturday. The Gulf states agree they need collective security but "there is little unanimity of how that should be carried out," according to Joseph P. Hoar, a former commander of U.S. Central Command for the Gulf and Red Sea areas. Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman must develop a "common air defence system and naval cooperation," said General Hoar, speaking to Kuwaiti businessmen as the co-chairman of the Middle East Forum of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Police kill five suspects in Egypt

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian police shot dead five suspected Muslim militants in a shootout on the outskirts of Cairo on Sunday, police said. They said police were going to arrest the men in a house in the Oct. 6 satellite city when the militants opened fire. Police returned fire and killed the five men. There were no police casualties. Officials said some of the men had recently returned from abroad to take part in acts of violence while others were believed to have been involved in attack against police in the southern province of Minya. Egypt's largest militant organisation, the Gama'a Al Islamiyah, killed 12 people, including nine policemen, in Minya province in the first two days of this year. The Gama'a is fighting to overthrow the government of President Hosni Mubarak and set up a strict Islamic State.

Clinton urges Greece, Turkey to aid stability

ATHENS (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton has called on Greece and Turkey to help aid Balkan stability and for Athens to show flexibility over links with Albania and Macedonia, to defuse growing tension in the region, the daily Kathimerini reported Sunday. Mr. Clinton told the paper he was concerned at the growing tension between Greece and Turkey which he said could risk an incident in the Aegean. He called on both states to avoid provoking each other and to pursue dialogue instead, possibly via the adoption of a bilateral good behaviour code of conduct agreement. The president also asked Athens to open an unconditional dialogue with Albania and not to block European Union aid. Saying Greece had an interest in Balkan stability and development, Mr. Clinton warned Athens against pursuing policies of isolation. The Greeks are making dialogue with Tirana conditional on the freeing of four members of the Greek minority jailed in Albania last October for alleged spying.

EI Al resumes flights to Moscow

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's flag carrier El Al is to resume Moscow flights on Monday after a week-long suspension because of Russia's refusal to allow the company's armed guards to carry their weapons in Moscow airport. "Flights will resume Monday, thanks to an agreement that allows El Al's security officers to carry on their duties as usual," transport ministry spokesman Elie Dahan said Sunday. Israel also dropped a threat to bar Russian planes from flying to Tel Aviv. The dispute erupted last week after Russian police barred Israeli security guards on board El Al flights from carrying their weapons inside Moscow's Chermetyevo airport.

Iran recalls ambassador to Norway

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has recalled its ambassador to Norway for hinting that the Islamic republic could reverse its stand over the death sentence issued against British writer Salman Rushdie, a weekly said here Sunday. Abdolrahim Gavanji was called home last week, accused of "failing to act in accordance with Iran's principled foreign policy stand," Kayhan-e-Havasi said. The diplomat had written a letter to the Norwegian foreign ministry, saying his government's "policy on the fatwa (death sentence) against Rushdie could change." The late founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, condemned Mr. Rushdie to death in 1989, saying his novel "The Satanic Verses" had blasphemed Islam. The present Iranian leader have upheld the sentence despite strong criticism from Western countries.

Window of opportunity for comprehensive peace closing

NICOSIA (AFP) — A window of opportunity for moving toward a broad and lasting peace in the Middle East is closing quickly with Israeli and American elections looming next year, experts say.

And some experts are starting to doubt the peace process itself — whether the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese will follow Jordan (1994) and Egypt (1979) in achieving peace with Israel.

"We're heading toward a breakdown" in the PLO-Israeli talks, Mohammad Sid Ahmad, a senior columnist at Egypt's pro-government Al-Ahram newspaper, told AFP.

Mr. Sid Ahmad, speaking by telephone from his home in Cairo, said the 1993 breakthrough in Oslo had raised Palestinian hopes for a better life after decades under Israeli military occupation.

Instead living standards have dropped sharply since self-rule was launched in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho last May.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) negotiators then warned of a crisis last week when Israeli soldiers shot dead three Palestinian policemen in Gaza and the government ruled that some Jewish settlement building could continue.

"Every issue is seen as critical when there is a general degradation of the situation," Mr. Sid Ahmad said.

Colonel Andrew Duncan, a senior analyst at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, blamed much of the economic troubles on PLO

chief Yasser Arafat's failure to set up independent accounting procedures.

International donors "don't like to write checks to Y. Arafat," Mr. Duncan said. "If the aid could come in, the population would be rather happier."

For now the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is "rather up in the air," according to Mr. Duncan, who served as British defence attaché in Tel Aviv from 1977 to 1980 during the years that Israel and Egypt made peace.

Zeev Maoz, head of the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, said that although the process might be moving too slowly and recent events "don't make it easy," the talks are not stalled. "Both the Israeli government and the PLO are committed to the peace process," Mr. Maoz said when contacted at his home in Tel Aviv.

He was also "not pessimistic" about chances for peace with Syria but warned that President Hafez Al Assad could miss the chance to strike a good deal with Israel as both Rabin and U.S. President Bill Clinton faced elections in 1996.

The elections could put a Republican administration in the White House that is less inclined to devote resources to support of peace treaties and install a right-wing Likud government in Israel that opposes territorial concessions.

"He's playing as if he has all the time in the world. What he can get today, he

may not get a year from now," Mr. Maoz said.

Syria demands a complete return of the Golan Heights captured in the 1967 war before announcing the scope of a peace treaty, while Israel wants a commitment first from Damascus for total peace with full diplomatic relations.

Any deal with Lebanon also hinges on an accord with Syria, which is the main foreign power broker in Beirut.

Mr. Duncan warned that if Mr. Rabin's Labour Party is not re-elected the peace process will move even more slowly.

Although he believed economic and military imperatives were driving Syria to seek peace with Israel, he said that failure on any negotiating track could undermine existing peace treaties, including that between Israel and Egypt.

Mr. Sid Ahmad said that Syria may be further encouraged to say put if the Palestinians make no progress and warned that nobody should think that the negotiations begun in 1991 will inevitably lead to peace.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin are expected to meet this week — although no date has been set — to try to resolve problems preventing the extension of autonomy on the West Bank.

The PLO wants Israeli troops to withdraw from urban areas ahead of elections to an autonomy council which had been scheduled to take place last July under the self-rule accord.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:00 Footballs
17:30 One Le Millionaire
18:00 Le Voyageur de L'Espresso
18:30 Les Intégrales
19:00 New in French
19:15 Magazine Sportif
19:30 Black Beauty
20:00 Beogin Drama
20:30 Street Hawk
21:00 Shades of L.A.
22:00 News in English
22:30 Flight Into Hell

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise)
11:32 Dhuhr
14:28 'Asr
16:57 Maghrib
18:14 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 810740
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634990
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 623666

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 632541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assumption International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 694195
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be relatively warm and sunny with winds southerly light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. Amman 4/15
Aqaba 9 / 23
Deserts 2 / 16
Jordan Valley 10 / 22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 14, Aqaba 20 Humidity

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN: Dr. Hisham Kan'an 790286
Dr. Jamal Jarrar 847351
Dr. Walid Al Masri 873485
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad 846070
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nakouda pharmacy 623672
Al Salan pharmacy 630730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shimani pharmacy 637660
Nakouda pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID: Dr. Ali Al Omari 272032
Alquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA: Dr. Samir Al Lawa 989601
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

Electric Power Company 840381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN: Husseini Medical Centre 813813/22

Control Centre 657111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 630341
Rescue Police 192 621111 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843902
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 603800
Water and Sewerage 661176
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 661176
Central Amman Telephone 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Water Authority 843902
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 660100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 840381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
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HOSPITALS
AMMAN: Husseini Medical Centre 813813/22

Control Centre 657111

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 643412/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642562
Malles, J. Amman 661140
Palestine, Shamsi 641711/4
Shamsi Hospital 660131
University Hospital 642845
Al-Munther Hospital 667277/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 661646
Italian, Al-Muhajir 771710/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 771112/6
Army, Marza 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 662403/0
Amal Hospital 674135
ZARQA: Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)903323
Zarga National Hospital (09)903360
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al-Humra Modern Hospital (09)999990
IBRD: Palazzina Basmal Hospital (02)727333
Great Catholic Hospital (02)727276
Al-Nafes Hospital (02)674100
AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)341111

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AMMAN: Husseini Medical Centre 813813/22

Control Centre 657111

HAJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:20 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

DEPARTURES

First-time ministers in the limelight

AMMAN (J.T.) — Following are biographical sketches of first-time ministers appointed to the Cabinet of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker yesterday.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs: Abdul Majid Azzam.

Born in Kufor Am, in Irbid, Dr. Azzam obtained a B.Sc. from the University of Nevada in the U.S. in 1973. He earned an M.A. in political science from California State University in 1981 and a Ph.D. from Clairmont University in California in 1983. He was employed at Yarmouk University from 1983 to 1993 and became associate professor of political science. Dr. Azzam was elected to the Lower House of Parliament as an independent representative of Irbid in 1993.



Minister of State: Mohammad Abu Oleim.

Born in Mafrq in 1949, Dr. Abu Oleim obtained a medical degree from Athens and worked for King Hussein Medical Centre. He was later employed at the University of Chicago in the U.S. Dr. Abu Oleim has also worked in Qatar. He was a member of the Royal Commission that drafted the Kingdom's National Charter. Dr. Abu Oleim has been a Mafrq deputy since the 1989 elections.



Minister of Labour: Nader Abu Sha'ar.

Born in Huson in 1941, Mr. Abu Sha'ar holds a medical degree from Italy and served as the head of surgery at Princess Basma Hospital in Irbid. He served in the 1986 Lower House of Parliament and was elected as an independent representative in the 1993 elections to represent Irbid.



Minister of State: Taha Habashneh.

Born in Shobak in 1944, Mr. Habashneh obtained a B.A. in Arabic language and worked at the University of Jordan. He represented Maan in Parliament since 1993.



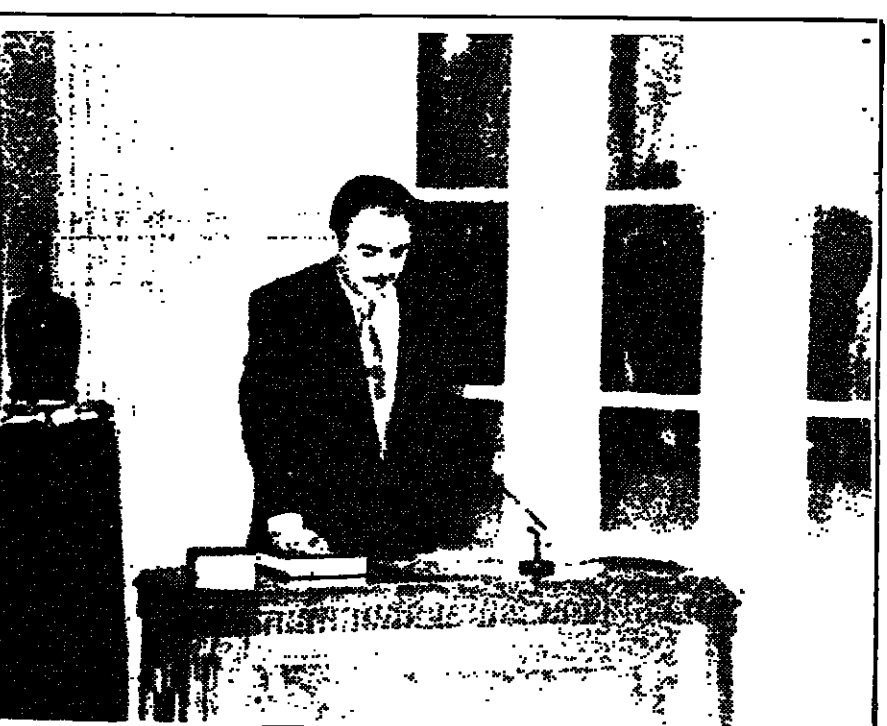
Minister of Tourism and Antiquities: Abdul Ilah Al Khatib.

Mr. Khatib, who was unavailable to provide biographical information late Sunday night, obtained two masters degrees, one in political science and the other in public administration. A career diplomat at the Foreign Ministry until he resigned to enter the private sector, Mr. Khatib participated in the Middle East peace negotiations. In his late thirties, Mr. Khatib is married and has three children.



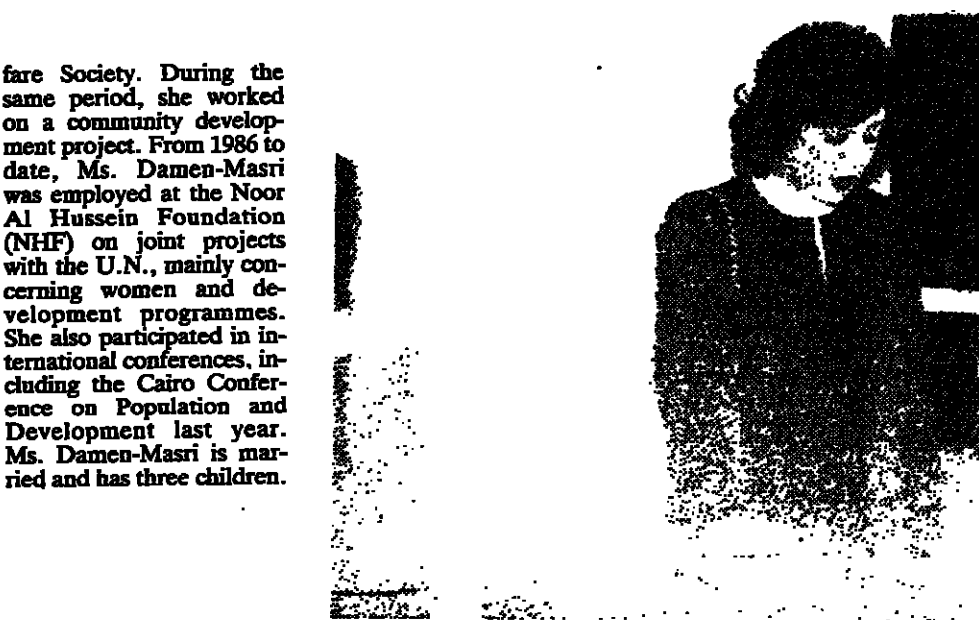
Minister of Culture: Samir Habashneh.

Born in Bethlehem in 1951, Mr. Habashneh obtained his B.A. in agriculture from Baghdad University in 1974. He worked in the agricultural field for the private and public sectors and as a columnist for Al-Dustour Arabic daily. He served as advisor to the minister of youth for one year ending in 1993, when he resigned to run for parliament. He was a member of the Royal Commission for the National Charter and is a member of the Centre for Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Studies Constituent Assembly. Mr. Habashneh was elected to the Lower House of Parliament as a member of the Jordan Arab Democratic Party from Karak in 1993.



Minister of Social Development: Salwa Damen-Masri.

Born in Nablus in 1946, Ms. Damen-Masri obtained a bachelors degree in nursing from the University of Jordan in 1977, a masters in demographic studies in 1984, also from the University of Jordan. From 1977 to 1982, she worked as a research assistant at the Community Medicine Department at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jordan. From 1982 to 1986, Ms. Damen-Masri worked at the Soldiers' Families Welfare Society. During the same period, she worked on a community development project. From 1986 to date, Ms. Damen-Masri was employed at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) on joint projects with the U.N., mainly concerning women and development programmes. She also participated in international conferences, including the Cairo Conference on Population and Development last year. Ms. Damen-Masri is married and has three children.



Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment: Nader Thuheirat.

Born in North Shuneh in 1942, Mr. Thuheirat obtained a B.A. in history from Damascus University in 1963. He worked for the Ministry of Education from 1964 to 1970. He was elected mayor of North Shuneh in 1988. Mr. Thuheirat was elected to the Lower House of Parliament as an independent representative from Kura in 1993.

Minister of Administrative Development: Moheldin Toq.

Mr. Toq, a university professor, could not be reached Sunday night. His area of expertise is administrative development. A Circassian, Mr. Toq has been an official at the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). He is in his 40s.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources: Samih Darwazah.

Born in Nablus in 1930,

Mr. Darwazah obtained a B.Sc. in pharmacy from the American University of Beirut. He earned a masters in pharmacy from the St. Louis College of Pharmacy in the U.S. Mr. Darwazah has held several pharmacy-related jobs until 1978 when he established Al Hikmah, a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, where he is chairman of the board and executive officer of Al Hikmah Investment. He is married and has four children and 10 grandchildren.

Arafat, Peres meet today

(Continued from page 12)

from the territories would be allowed to work in Israel.

Twenty-six thousands of the Palestinians live in the occupied West Bank and 24,000 in the self-rule Gaza Strip, a spokesman for the military administration said. The number of work permits, which was set at 33,500 at the end of November, was gradually increased in December and January, following a request from the Palestinian self-rule authority.

Israel had sealed the territories following a series of attacks which culminated in the suicide bombing of a bus in Tel Aviv on Oct. 19 which killed 22 people.

But closing off the territories has had a serious economic impact on residents of Gaza, where unemployment is around 50 per cent and

families rely on workers' incomes from Israel.

Previously about 70,000 Palestinians had been authorised to travel to Israel each day to work.

On Saturday, Israeli police arrested several people when they broke up an angry demonstration by hundreds of Israeli settlers and right-wing militants calling on Mr. Rabin to resign over Palestinian attacks.

Carrying torches and pictures of killed Jews, demonstrators chanted "Rabin resign" and "enough bloodshed" as they rallied outside the premier's official residence.

A similar protest was staged outside Mr. Rabin's family home in Tel Aviv.

"The evidence is now that peace only exists inside Rabin's head," a spokesman for the settlers, Menahem Gush Arie, said in a speech.

Perry and Rabin hold talks

(Continued from page 12)

the Zionist regime to destroy its nuclear weapons." Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi said.

He accused Israel of "continuing efforts to produce nuclear weapons" and criticised its refusal to have its facilities inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Mr. Mohammadi said Iran was opposed to the proliferation

of weapons of mass destruction and called for the Middle East to be free of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

His comments came amid Iranian concern at threats that Israel may attack its nuclear facilities.

A New York Times reported earlier in the week that Israeli officials had said the Jewish state could be forced to consider attacking

Iran's nuclear reactor if it does not stop its nuclear programme.

"Israel was dead wrong in making such claims if it thought it had the capability to carry out its threats with no fear of reprisal," a statement by the Iranian mission at the United Nations in New York said.

Israel's jet fighters bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981.

Iraq hopes to isolate U.S.

(Continued from page 12)

round of talks he was referring to.

Iraq has in the past turned down a \$1.6 billion oil sale because of the intrusive monitoring which included strict U.N. control of the contracts and distribution of humanitarian goods bought with the oil revenues.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid urged Iraq on Saturday to abide by all Gulf crisis-related U.N. demands to facilitate Arab reconciliation.

Dr. Abdul Meguid denied in a news conference in Saudi Arabia that he was trying to convene an Arab summit and said "the mistake" of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait "must

be corrected."

"This never means God forgives for the past," said Dr. Abdul Meguid who played a major role as Egypt's foreign minister during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis in forming a solid Arab anti-Iraq camp in the region.

"Let me repeat once more, the U.N. resolutions must be met (by Iraq)," he added.

Russian forces

(Continued from page 1) almost deserted by midday (0900 GMT), as were parallel streets and alleyways.

The injured were being transported from the centre, some in private cars and others in armoured personnel carriers captured from Russia and now flying the green, red and white Chechen flag. One dead soldier lay in an armoured personnel carrier.

Several soldiers reported Russian troops had attacked in force on Saturday from the railway station, about 1.5 kilometres south of the palace. The attack was repulsed, they said.

Russian troops apparently changed tactics in Grozny at the weekend after suffering heavy losses in a New Year's Eve tank-led drive on the city.

Movladi Udugov, head of the Chechen national information service, told Russian television Kremlin forces had abandoned the ploy of trying to take Grozny with tanks and were instead destroying the city block by block.

In Moscow, a Russian Defence Ministry spokesman

confirmed fighting was continuing.

"Federal troops are holding steady in Grozny and are cleansing the railway station ... of Dudayev's gunmen," the spokesman told ITAR-TASS.

Interfax reported that Sergei Kovalyov, Russia's human rights commissioner, had flown back to Chechnya after a brief visit to Moscow to plead in vain for Russia to make a truce.

Mr. Kovalyov believes Russian democracy is in danger now conservative military bosses are in the ascendancy.

Also in Moscow, about 1,500 communists staged a noisy rally against Russia's military actions. Liberals have also denounced the campaign, leaving ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy as the only major parliamentary leader backing Mr. Yeltsin's campaign.

A Russian deputy in Grozny, Aivars Lezdinsk, accused Russian planes of dropping fragmentation bombs, banned under the Geneva Convention, "on Chechnya's civilian population, as well as on the combat zones."

Tough minister back

(Continued from page 12)

Zeid's second cabinet from 1991 until May 1993. He began a seven-year reform programme in 1992.

However, colleagues say the workaholic, who graduated from the American University of Beirut in 1956, is moody and obstinate. He refused demands to ease harsh economic reforms.

After leaving government, he was managing director of Amman's Jordan Investment and Finance Bank, which he founded in the 1980s with other businessmen and family members.

Months later, he became chairman of debt-burdened Royal Jordanian Airlines, the national flagship, to restructure it and prepare for a possible privatisation.

Mr. Jardahe helped set up Jordan's Central Bank in the early 1960s and stayed many years before becoming secretary general of the National Planning Council, then the government's agency for macro-economic planning.

Sri Lanka begins 2-week truce

COLOMBO (R) — Guns fell silent across Sri Lanka's northeast region for the first time in four years Sunday at the start of a two-week truce between the government and Tamil separatist rebels, military officers said.

"The truce is holding — we have had no reports of violations in the 12-hour period to 12 noon (0730 GMT)," a senior officer said by telephone from Mannar district.

Army officers from other areas made similar reports but rebel spokesmen could not be reached for confirmation.

The cessation of hostilities came into force at 12 midnight on Jan. 7 and foreign-backed peace committees to monitor it are expected to start operating Monday or Tuesday.

The truce, the first since an April 1989 to June 1990 ceasefire, followed last week's agreement between President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Tamil rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on a ceasefire as a step towards peace.

A morning meeting due Sunday between government and rebel military commanders was however called off.

"The rebel leadership informed us through the International Committee of the Red Cross that the meeting was off because all their commanders in the north and the east had been summoned for a briefing in their northern Jaffna stronghold," a military source said.

The two sides had been expected to discuss arrangements for the truce, due to last till Jan. 22 but expected to be extended.

The truce was initially worked out by government officials and negotiators for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas last week in talks in Jaffna. The two sides also agreed on a 40 billion rupee (\$816 million) rehabilitation plan for the north.

The truce will be monitored by six committees based in Jaffna, Mannar, Mullativu and Vavuniya in the north and Trincomalee and Batticaloa-Ampara in the east.

Each committee will have two members from the government and two from the rebels, with a representative from a foreign country chairing it.

Norway and the Netherlands have accepted invitations to serve on the committees.

In Batticaloa, 200 Tamil prisoners suspected of involvement in rebel activity began a hunger strike urging the government to release them in view of the truce.

More than 30,000 people have died since 1983 when the Tigers stepped up their campaign for an independent homeland in the north and the east for the island's minority Tamil community.

The campaign found favour initially with most Tamils because of discrimination by the main Sinhalese community. But with the conflict dragging on for years and thousands of people dying in the process, most Tamils say they will be happy with some kind of autonomous rule and an end to the war.

Meanwhile the Sunday Times of Colombo said police had arrested the husband of a suspected rebel suicide killer who blew up presidential candidate Gamini Disanayake at an election rally last October.

The rebels denied accusations by some police officers that they were responsible but the government suspended the second round of peace talks scheduled to resume then and re-started it only last Tuesday.

Tamil Tigers have announced a daily ferry service to their Jaffna peninsula stronghold as the truce went into effect, residents in rebel-held territory said Sunday.

They reported that the LTTE had said they would operate day-time crossings of the Jaffna lagoon — earlier declared a no-go zone by the navy — following their "cessation of hostilities" agreement with the Colombo government.

Tamil residents arriving at the government-controlled town of Vavuniya, 255 kilometres (160 miles) north of here, said the Tigers had announced a daily boat schedule to replace hazardous night-time crossings three times a week.

The government and the LTTE have also agreed in principle to open two land routes to the Jaffna peninsula but no firm dates have yet been worked out, officials said.



Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi (centre), Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu (left) and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (right) pose at the Presidential Palace prior to the start of a one-day summit to discuss how to persuade hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees to return home. Leaders from seven central and east African nations gathered to attend the meeting. (AFP photo)

African leaders clash on Rwandan refugees

NAIROBI (AFP) — Leaders from seven African nations meeting here Saturday urged the creation of "safe corridors" for returning Rwandan refugees and called on the new Rwandan government to work harder for internal peace.

But they clashed over demands for national reconciliation in a session marked by angry disagreements.

The presidents of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia and the prime minister of Zaire agreed a brief statement after their five-hour closed-door meeting backing the United Nations international criminal tribunal, set up in November to try those responsible for the April to June massacres in Rwanda.

Up to a million people — mostly ethnic Tutsis — are thought to have been killed between April and June last year in Rwanda and hundreds of thousands of Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi, displaced both within and outside the country.

The joint communiqué urged the creation of "safe corridors" to allow refugees in camps in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire safe passage to the Rwandan border and through into the country itself.

They also announced that they supported the "separation of the suspected perpetrators of the genocide from innocent refugees" within the camps but did not say

how this would be done.

At the end of November, a first group of 26 Hutu militiamen thought to be responsible for some of the massacres were arrested and handed over by Zaire to the authorities in Kigali.

A member of the Rwandan delegation said the most controversial point was how to bring about national reconciliation. The Rwandan authorities have so far refused to negotiate with parties they consider implicated in the genocide — thought to have been organised by groups loyal to the former President Juvenal Habyarimana.

The delegate, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an unspecified number of delegations had insisted that the government allow members of Mr. Habyarimana's former ruling National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) into its own ranks — something the government has refused.

Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu and Zairean Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo appeared shortly afterwards coming out of the meeting room, continuing a loud argument with earshot of attending journalists.

Mr. Dondo accused the Rwandan president of failing to "establish peace" in Rwanda.

"You ask us to establish peace and democracy, but you haven't got them yourselves," Mr. Bizimungu retorted.

Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi said before the summit: "The question that should be uppermost in our minds is how to prevent such a catastrophe as was witnessed last year from repeating itself."

"It is only through a genuine process of national reconciliation that a cycle of violence in our sister state can be avoided," he said. Delegates said the glaring absence of Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, the only head of state to stay away from Nairobi, detracted from the meeting's ability to decide effective measures. Zaire shelters hundreds of thousands of refugees among whom are numbered thousands of Hutu former soldiers and militia fighters.

From the statement, it was difficult to see if any practical measures would follow, as demanded before the summit by Rwanda's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Minister Jacques Habyarimana.

Mr. Bizimungu told journalists before the meeting he wanted transit zones to be set up for returning refugees, the countrywide deployment of human rights observers, and extra U.N. soldiers — 5,500 — to police the operation.

He said U.N. troops were needed in particular to separate the former regime's soldiers and militia from refugees in giant camps in Zaire and Tanzania where they continued a campaign of intimidation.

Clinton touts tax breaks, tweaks Congress

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton Saturday vowed to protect his programme to reduce the national budget deficit from any attempt by the Republican-controlled Congress to increase deficit-spending to pay for tax cuts.

"We have led the way to the largest two-year deficit reduction in the history of our country, and I will not allow anyone to destroy this progress in reducing the deficit and to threaten our economic recovery," Mr. Clinton said in his weekly radio address delivered from the Oval Office.

Mr. Clinton feels generous Republican tax-cut proposals would halt his effort to reduce the deficit, which he said has stanchied the flow of red ink by \$700 billion in two years, or \$11,000 in less debt for every family in America.

He insists his own five-year, \$60 billion proposal for middle-class tax breaks, including credits for education costs, would not add to the deficit.

"Now, anybody can say, 'I want to give you a tax cut,' and make people very happy in the short run," Mr. Clinton said. "I want our people to have more than a quick fix."

Republicans counter that their plans for cuts in government spending to be unveiled later this month would pay for tax relief.

In the Republican response, Representative James Longley of Maine said Republicans would press ahead with plans to reduce the size and cost of government.

"Mr. President, Americans are working for less money because their taxes have been going up faster than their incomes. Government has become the problem. And we're serious about shrinking government."

The president, trying to remain a viable political force in spite of devastating Nov. 8 elections in which Republicans took control of both the House of Senate, saw his public approval rating go up to 47 per cent against 44 per cent disapproval in a new CNN/Time magazine poll released Saturday.

This was an improvement over a similar poll last month that showed 41 per cent of people approved his handling of the job while 49 per cent disapproved.

But in a sobering statistic, the survey found that most Americans do not think the president will be reelected in 1996. A total of 65 per cent polled said he would lose against 24 per cent who thought he would win.

On the comeback trail, Mr. Clinton is portraying himself as a leader who can work with the majority party.

"We've seen for too long how people in Washington can obstruct progress for partisan gains," he said in the radio address.

But he also took the opportunity to tweak the majority in Congress for failing to vote in favour of lobbying reform.

Ailing Pope to draw huge crowds in Philippines

MANILA (R) — Pope John Paul II will be greeted by hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of largely uncritical devotees when he visits the Philippines this week on his first big four since being stricken with ill health last year.

The Pope, who had bone replacement surgery on his right leg last April, will be under the spotlight to see whether the man who used to dazzle aides with his workload can still withstand the rigours of a trip that will take him to Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka.

In Asia's only predominantly Christian country, where divorce and abortion are outlawed, the Pontiff is likely to hear little of the public criticism his conservative religious doctrines provoke in Europe and North America.

Estimates of the crowds he will attract in his four days in Manila to celebrate the 10th World Day of Youth begin at one million and top two million.

"I have so many problems to stop people from coming but I think that the area will accommodate about two million people," Cardinal Jaime Sin, Manila's archbishop and the nation's most powerful prelate, said in an interview.

"People will come, how can I stop them," he said. It will be Pope John Paul's third visit to the Philippines and his second as Pope. As Pope he first visited in 1981 when the Philippines was just emerging from years of martial law.

The Roman Catholic Church, which represents 85 per cent of the 65 million people in the Philippines, sees itself as a "bridge" for Christian Evangelisation in Asia.

It is a deeply spiritual country where parish priests regularly pack their churches with the faithful in a way long forgotten in Europe.

Estimates of the crowds he will attract in his four days in Manila to celebrate the 10th World Day of Youth begin at one million and top two million.

Trade, N. Korea top agenda for U.S.-Japan summit

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Trade and the North Korea nuclear issue will be high on the agenda when President Bill Clinton meets with Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama here Wednesday.

The trade issue has calmed down considerably since a summit last February when Mr. Clinton and then Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa ended their meeting with the announcement that talks on opening Japan's markets and reducing its massive trade surplus with Washington were being suspended.

But officials have been at pains to stress this fact in recent days, with news of a resumption of crucial auto talks which have been in limbo since October.

There have also been hints that the two sides are likely to announce accords on financial services and boosting Japanese government purchases of foreign computers next week.

The president will spend a substantial amount of time on trade issues with the (Japanese) prime minister next week," a senior U.S. official said Friday.

But both U.S. and Japanese officials stressed that the atmosphere on trade is very different from last year, when the issue dominated the entire meeting.

On foreign policy, Mr. Clinton and Mr. Murayama are expected to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue, and progress towards implementing an agreement under which the United States, Japan and South Korea will work together to provide Pyongyang with light water reactors to generate power.

Working level talks between the three countries are due to open here Monday on the setting up of the Korea Energy Development Corporation (KEDO), which will be in charge of financing and building the reactors.

Japanese press reports have said that Tokyo will foot 30 per cent of the cost of the new reactors, to be provided to North Korea in exchange for abandoning its own nuclear programme.

Officials in Tokyo refused to comment on the report, and U.S. officials here said that while Japan had pledged to play a part in the nuclear programme, the amount had not yet been settled.

The United States, South Korea and Japan are hoping that KEDO will be able to hold its first meeting in February.

The other key issue on the foreign policy front is APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Japan is the group's chairman this year and thus responsible for overseeing an APEC free trade timetable agreed at a summit in November.

There is concern in Washington that Japan may be less keen to push ahead than either the United States, or Indonesia which drafted the timetable, a senior U.S. official said.

"If it is for this reason that the president will spend time with Mr. Murayama on APEC."

"Japan's leadership needs to be exercised in a very pro-active manner" to ensure the timetable is respected, the official said.

The two sides are also hoping to use this summit in the 50th anniversary year of the ending of World War II to take stock of their bilateral relationship and where it is headed in the next 50 or 100 years.

"This is a very critical point" and the two leaders will try to "see how to set up a shared view of what our bilateral relationship should be in the next century or 50 years," said a Japanese official here.

Mr. Murayama will be accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Yoshi Kono, who will be present at Wednesday's summit.

Mr. Kono will also meet Tuesday with Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

The Japanese premier's visit is relatively brief. He arrives Tuesday, and visits Arlington military cemetery and other landmarks, meets with Mr. Clinton and probably congressional leaders Wednesday, then leaves for home Thursday.

Storms lash U.S., tornado hits Florida

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Fierce winter storms lashed much of the United States, causing at least a dozen traffic deaths on icy highways, while tornadoes damaged homes in central Florida, authorities said.

A storm moving in from Alaska brought driving rain and snow and strong winds to northern California, downing power lines and cutting off electricity to tens of thousands of people.

In Los Angeles, heavy rain flooded freeways, sent mudslides pouring onto roads in Malibu, and was blamed for numerous accidents.

Severe thunderstorms, including storm-triggered tornadoes, caused severe property damage in the Orlando, Florida, area, where some garage doors were torn from homes.

A Tornado ripped through Marion County, Florida, before dawn, destroying dozens of mobile homes in a trailer park and uprooting trees.

The western Great Lakes region shivered in freezing temperatures and Omaha, Nebraska, was blanketed with snow Friday.

Icy weather made driving hazardous across Tennessee, the Carolinas and Ohio.

In the Carolinas and Virginia, five motorists were killed on icy roads as freezing rain caused hundreds of accidents.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol reported two traffic fatalities since Friday afternoon and said at least one was due to icy roads.

Weather-related traffic deaths were reported in southern Ohio.

Northern California was pounded throughout the night by heavy rain and snow and strong winds. There was a lull in the storm Saturday, but two more storms were forecast to arrive before Monday.

French EU presidency gets off to a bumpy start

PARIS (R) — France's six-month presidency of the European Union has got off to a bumpy start on the very issue on which Paris vowed to make progress — establishing a credible, coordinated EU foreign policy.

The first week of French stewardship featured a public row over France's solo initiative in thawing relations with Iraq and some dithering over Russia's military assault on rebel Chechnya.

On the plus side, the EU did manage a "routine" statement on clashes between Israel and the Palestinians, and Paris hosted confidential talks designed to keep Western embassies open and safe in Algeria despite a purported Islamic guerrilla threat.

But it was France's official reception of a senior Iraqi leader for the first time since the 1991 Gulf war that highlighted the limits of EU solidarity in foreign affairs.

In a jibe rich in political irony, Euro-sceptical Britain faulted the French for being poor Europeans by failing to coordinate the decision to open a diplomatic interest section in Baghdad with their EU partners.

"No other member state has reestablished in this way," the British Foreign Office fulminated, adding that this was no time to ease pressure on President Saddam Hussein to comply with U.N. resolutions arising from the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Paradoxically, Paris's welcome for Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, a close aide of Saddam, and its establishment of a diplomatic threshold in Baghdad, caused less concern in Kuwait, which voiced understanding, than in London and Washington, which also condemned the move.

Diplomats said France had informed its Western and Middle East partners in advance of Mr. Aziz's impending visit, but Britain said there was no EU coordination.

"This incident demonstrates that when national interests are at stake, the big European powers still go it alone rather than waiting for a European consensus to emerge," a diplomat from one of the smaller EU states said.

In this case, the national interest would appear to be that Iraq, long a prime client

for French arms and capital goods, owes Paris about \$5 billion and is unable to earn hard currency to service its debt due to the U.N. oil embargo.

The Chechnya conflict has confronted the EU with a foreign policy challenge more complex, if more remote, than the war on its doorstep in former Yugoslavia.

Chechnya is sovereign Russian territory, and EU states agree they have an interest in preserving Russia's territorial integrity. Yet Moscow's heavy-handed onslaught to crush the rebel Chechen government has appalled Western public opinion.

It was German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, rather than the French EU presidency, who took the lead in personally urging Russian President Boris Yeltsin to stop the assault on Grozny.

France led the so-called troika of the present, previous and next EU presidents in talks with the Russian Foreign Ministry, urging Moscow to allow the largely toothless 52-nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to broker a peaceful solution.

Neither effort yielded immediate results.

EU members and institutions made their own moves. EU Foreign Political Relations Commissioner Hans Van Den Broek said Brussels was putting a key trade accord with Moscow on ice to show its concern "verging on indignation" over Chechnya.

Denmark suspended a defence cooperation agreement with Russia. British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd wrote to his Russian counterpart to express concern. But Mr. Kohl said he opposed threats and sanctions against Moscow.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament began hearings with four members of the incoming European Commission who are to divide responsibility for foreign policy on geographical lines.

British Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, who will be in charge of ties with the West, Japan and China, said the new system was about as likely to work as the previous arrangement, in which commissioners fought endless turf wars and foreign governments had no single address for relations with Brussels.

Man files suit for marrying wrong bride

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian man has filed a law suit against his wife's parents for fooling him into marrying the older sister of the woman he loves, newspapers said Saturday.

The man, identified only as 25-year-old Ibrahim, told a Tehran court he wanted to marry the family's youngest daughter, Maryam, and sent his parents to ask for her hand. But on the wedding day, the family replaced Maryam with their oldest daughter and he could not tell the difference because her face was covered in keeping with Islamic tradition. It was only after the ceremony that the groom realised he had been duped into taking the wrong wife, newspapers said. Similar incidents have occurred in the past in Iran.

As a precaution, the groom's family has a woman verify the identity of the bride before the oaths are taken.

Dozens queue for stolen violins

PARIS (R) — Paris police exhibited 1,000 stolen violins in an unusual identification parade Saturday, asking owners to step forward and spot their lost instruments. Dozens of musicians from France and other European countries queued up at the Drouot-Montaigne Auction Hall, trying to identify their violins through hidden marks or just by the feel of them. Experts said violin players could recognise their instrument just by touching it, eyes closed. But police asked owners to produce some property evidence such as pictures, purchase slips or police theft reports. Police mounted the four-day exhibition after recovering the violins from an antique dealer who was detained last November. He is suspected of buying them cheaply from thieves and reselling them at high prices. Police said several of the violins were valued at hundreds of thousands of francs (tens of thousands of dollars).

Bank reopens with coffin as well as coffers

LONDON (R) — A branch of a British bank has reopened after a hi-tech refit which kept some much-loved features of the old building, including a coffin in the rafters. NatWest Bank bosses decided to honour the wishes of grocer Henry Trigg who, before he died in 1724, stipulated his coffin and remains should be left in the rafters of his building in Steventage, a small town north of London.

Trigg, terrified his body would be snatched by grave robbers supplying surgeons and medical-school students, wanted his corpse left where it could be seen and protected. Sadly his fears came true during World War I when soldiers billeted in the town stole his bones for souvenirs. "We feel Henry is very much part of the family. No one minds working next to a coffin and there is even talk that his ghost comes out occasionally," said bank Manager Noel Whittle.

Bottle took 7 years to cross Atlantic

LA ROCHELLE, France (AFP) — A bottle tossed into the sea off the southeastern United States in 1987 washed up on a beach near this western port seven years later, and was found by a pensioner on a New Year's Eve stroll. The 63-year-old Robert Poirier said he picked up the shellfish-covered, clear-glass bottle on New Year's Eve. Inside was a \$1 note and a message saying: "Congratulations, you have found the bottle of Chris Wren," along with an address and two telephone numbers. Inquiries disclosed that the bottle began its voyage on July 25, 1987 at 10 a.m. from Wassaw Island off Georgia.

Bookies offer 500-1 odds on Elvis being alive

LONDON (AFP) — Gamblers prepared to have a flutter on Elvis Presley still being alive, almost 18 years after his official death, can get odds of 500-to-one, British bookies William Hill said Saturday. "I'm afraid that the odds seem to be losing their faith in the return of Elvis," who would have been 60 Saturday, a spokesman for the betting chain said. "We only take the occasional fiver or tenner these days. A couple of years ago bets of hundreds of pounds were commonplace," the spokesman added.



Chechen fighters take cover allowing an armoured personnel carrier captured from the Russian troops to go forward on the main street leading to the Presidential Palace in Grozny. Intense Russian artillery fire and air raids left the palace, symbol of Chechnya's three-year-old drive for independence, in flames today as Moscow escalated its assault on the capital of the rebel Caucasus republic (AFP photo)

Shades of Sarajevo haunt Grozny

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Shouts of "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) and thunderous artillery fire echo through the capital as Muslim street fighters with green headbands and Kalashnikov rifles battle tanks manned by Orthodox Christians.

Women and children cower in basement bomb shelters while blocks of flats and office buildings burn through the night. There is no running water or electricity and — for the poor at least — no escape from the city.

Television pictures of the carnage win underdog Muslim's world sympathy for their pluck, but the public remain generally uninterested in the centuries of history that have suddenly erupted in fighting.

This is Grozny in Chechnya, not Sarajevo in Bosnia, but the similarities are eerie.

The two cities on the fringes of Europe's have become battlegrounds where mostly

Muslim peoples are under assault from Orthodox Christian enemies.

The Balkans lie on one of the world's great fault lines, where Rome and Constantinople once divided the Christian world into east and west and where catholicism later contended with the Muslim empire of Ottoman Turks.

The Caucasus, a patchwork of ethnic groups, was seized by imperial Russia in the last century. It took Moscow 40 years to quell resistance from the region, and the fiercely independent Chechens were never happy under Russia's yoke.

Despite Chechnya's 1991 declaration of independence, Russia insists the region is an integral part of the Russian Federation. No country recognises the region in the north Caucasus as an independent state.

Tangles of languages and religions have made the Balkans and the Caucasus among the world's most turbulent areas, ignited afresh by the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Predominantly Muslim Sarajevo has been under siege by the Bosnian Serbs for more than 1,000 days, with 10,000 residents killed and another 50,000 wounded by snipers and shell fire.

On the strength of a recent ceasefire, many observers hope the conflict there has entered its final stages.

Russian troops have been battering Grozny for just a month, but already their heavy guns have ripped the fabric of the city seemingly beyond repair.

Wary of taking heavy casualties, prohibited by political considerations from levelling the capital with bombers, the Russians have adopted the Serb tactics of

Rose presses on with Bosnia truce

SARAJEVO (R) — The United Nations military commander in Bosnia, struggling to cement a fragile ceasefire, Sunday pressed on with efforts to overcome Serb objections to the way the truce is to be implemented.

U.N. Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose held hurriedly arranged talks with the commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, General Ratko Mladic, in the ski resort of Jahorina in the mountains above Sarajevo.

Negotiations on finalising details of the ceasefire have stumbled over a row about a demilitarised zone near the Bosnian capital.

The Serbs have refused to reopen roads into Sarajevo to civilian traffic until troops of the Muslim-led Bosnian government army leave the demilitarised zone on snow-bound Mount Igman overlooking the city.

The four-month ceasefire, which took effect on Jan. 1 following a peacemaking visit to Bosnia by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, is intended to pave the way for talks on a political settlement of the 33-month-old war in Bosnia.

But Bosnian Croats, the war's third main faction, made clear Sunday that they were ready to fight on if peace negotiations did not start before the ceasefire expires in May.

"Unless political talks on a final peaceful settlement in Bosnia begin by May 1 we shall start fresh liberating activities," Kresimir Zubak, president of Bosnia's Croat-Muslim federation, told a news conference in Zagreb.

The Bosnian Croats, backed by troops from Croatia, launched a successful offensive in southwestern Bosnia in December, capturing a large part of the Livno Valley and forcing 5,000 Serb civilians to flee.

The Serbs retaliated by shelling Livno and the surrounding area. They last attacked Saturday, violating the ceasefire with about 15 shells hitting in and around the town.

The United Nations says however that the ceasefire is generally holding, with the exception of the Bihac enclave in northwestern Bosnia where rebel Serb and Muslim elements have not signed the truce.

A United Nations spokesman said fighting continued around the town of Velika Kladusa in the northern part of the Bihac enclave where Bosnian government forces are faced by renegade Muslims and Serb forces from Croatia.

Elsewhere in Bosnia, the United Nations reported just

eight confirmed ceasefire violations in the past 24 hours.

There were more than 300 artillery explosions and bursts of machinegun fire, but the United Nations only considers these to represent ceasefire violations when it can confirm they are attacks by one side on the other.

A U.N. spokesman said General Rose might have talks with Bosnian government military officials after meeting Gen. Mladic, but this was not confirmed.

U.N. peacekeepers set out again on a patrol of the Mount Igman demilitarised zone to check whether Bosnian soldiers had withdrawn from one remaining occupied area.

If they were found to have pulled out of the Vojkovica area, U.N. peacekeepers would take government and Bosnian Serb officers on a joint inspection of the zone Monday to verify that no more combatants remained inside.

Bosnian Serb military officers dispute the U.N. claim that the demilitarised zone has been all but vacated by government forces and made clear again Sunday that they would not reopen roads into Sarajevo while government troops remained.

Sarajevo Airport was

reopened to humanitarian aid flights a day after they were halted when two U.N. relief planes were hit by gunfire.

U.N. spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon said 23 flights were expected Sunday.

The Sarajevo airlift, the main means of feeding the city's 380,000 residents, has been disrupted dozens of times by gunfire since it started in mid-1992.

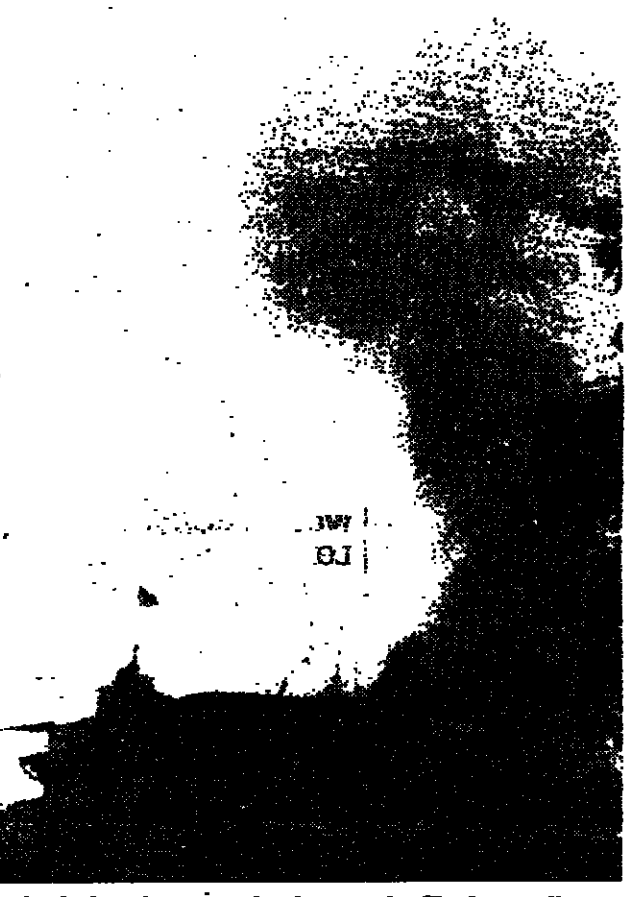
On Saturday two French U.N. peacekeeping soldiers were slightly wounded by gunfire in Sarajevo the U.N. spokesman said.

Major Gourmelon said UNPROFOR had not determined who had shot at the French peacekeepers.

A ceasefire has been in place throughout Bosnia since Jan. 1, but random shooting increased in Sarajevo over the weekend during the Serbs' festive Orthodox Christmas holiday.

Maj. Gourmelon said a French patrol vehicle came under small arms fire in the western suburb of Dobrinja in mid-afternoon and its driver was hit in the eye by shattering glass.

In the second incident, a French soldier was hit in the arm by a bullet while on duty at Sarajevo's Brotherhood and Unity Bridge, which spans a front line near the centre of the city.



A cloud of smoke covers the sky over the Chechen parliament building opposite the Presidential Palace in Grozny. The intensity of the Russian artillery fire was unprecedented in the month-old intervention by Moscow's troops and forced secessionist fighters to fall back around the presidential building (AFP photo)

standing back and pulverising Grozny with tanks and artillery.

So far the method has served the Russians no better than it did the Serbs in Sarajevo. Like the Serbs, they were confident their armour and superior firepower would lead to quick victory.

But lightly armed resistance fighters — rag-tag militias rather than professional soldiers — in both Sarajevo and Grozny have fought tanks and infantry to a standstill in ferocious street battles.

The most important difference between Sarajevo and Grozny is that the world has always viewed the Bosnian war as a containable conflict without broader geopolitical significance.

By comparison, the Chechens have tweaked the nose of a former superpower with an identity crisis.

The military muddle and political agony over what to do in Grozny may have just begun, but Russia desperately needs a decisive outcome. It must demonstrate the will and ability to control its smaller dominions or face chaos.

Unlike Bosnia, Chechnya does not enjoy a buffer in the form of the United Nations peacekeepers, aid workers and mediators whose presence in Bosnia has slowly raised the possibility of a final political solution to the war there.

Bosnia's seat on the United Nations gave the international community a reason to intervene, but Russia views Chechnya as an internal matter, off-limits to the world.

That leaves Chechen fighters starting into the maw of the great Russian military machine, with faint hope of compromise, screaming "victory or death."

Malawi's Banda is due in court today

BLANTYRE, Malawi (Agencies) — Malawi's ex-President Kamuzu Banda and former strongman John Tembo, both charged with murdering their political opponents, will appear in court Monday to apply for bail, a government official said Sunday.

Director of Public Prosecution Kamdoni Nyasulu told Reuters that Mr. Banda, who is believed to be in his 90s and senile, as well as Mr. Tembo and two policemen would appear at Zomba Magistrate Court, 60 kilometres southeast of Blantyre.

The four have been charged with eight counts each of murder and conspiracy to murder arising from the 1983 deaths of four senior politicians.

A government inquiry said Wednesday that police acting on official orders had killed cabinet ministers Aaron Gadamu, Dick Matenje and Twaibu Sangala and Member of Parliament David Chiwanga in May 1983 and disguised their deaths as a car crash.

After the commission made its findings public, the government placed Mr. Banda under house arrest and Mr. Tembo was taken to prison.

"What happens tomorrow (Monday) involves all the four accused persons," Mr. Nyasulu said.

He would not comment on whether they could be granted bail.

But lawyers for Mr. Banda and Mr. Tembo said failure to grant bail would be inconsistent with the constitution.

"The aim of detention should not be to punish the accused. If the accused are given bail and are later proved guilty on the charges, they can be imprisoned again," one lawyer said.

Mr. Banda, a self-proclaimed life president, ruled Malawi for three decades from independence from Britain in 1964 until he was ousted in its first multi-party elections in May last year.

Mr. Tembo, in his early 60s, was minister of state and virtual prime minister before last year's elections. He was regarded as the power behind Mr. Banda as the ageing leader slipped into senility.

Political sources questioned whether police would have much success in extracting a coherent statement from Mr. Banda.

President Bakili Muluzi dismissed suggestions that his predecessor was too old to stand trial for murder.

In an interview Saturday Mr. Muluzi said if Mr. Banda was too aged now to stand trial, he should not have run in last May's presidential elections.

"I mean if he stood as a presidential candidate, supposing he had won — how would he have ruled this country for five years?" Mr. Muluzi said.

Scandals return to haunt Balladur

PARIS (Agencies) — Corruption scandals returned to haunt French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur Sunday, just as his popularity reached new heights ahead of this spring's presidential election.

Two of his ministers, key allies in his probable bid for the presidency, were at the weekend the targets of accusations that they could be involved in illegal party financing.

The treasurer of the centrist Republican Party (PR), parliamentarian Jean-Pierre Thomas, was formally placed under investigation Friday on suspicion of illegal financing.

He immediately pointed a vengeful finger at the leaders of the PR, Defence Minister Francois Leotard, Enterprise Minister Alain Madelin and ex-Industry and Trade Minister Gerard Longuet.

"I agree to be responsible but I won't be made a scapegoat," Mr. Thomas told France 2 Television Saturday night.

"I believe a treasurer manages the party finances under the leadership and authority of the party leaders," he said, adding that they should all be accountable to the law.

Mr. Thomas is being investigated on suspicion of falsifying invoices, fraud and being an accomplice to fraud in a probe that has caused Mr. Longuet to resign from the cabinet last year under suspicion of setting up an illegal party funding network and under-paying for a Riviera villa.

Asked if Mr. Longuet, Mr. Leotard and Mr. Madelin knew of the PR's financing, Mr. Thomas said: "Of course, they and many others did... all major PR decisions are taken collectively."

Another centrist politician, Jean Bousquet, mayor of the southern town of Nimes, was being probed on suspicion of falsifying invoices, legal sources said at the weekend.

Most major French political parties have been hit by illegal financing scandals.

Mr. Balladur has said any minister involved in a justice probe should leave the cabinet. His popularity plunged last year after his ex-communication Minister Alain Carignon was jailed on suspicion of corruption and a third cabinet member, Cooperation Minister Michel Roussin quit in another party financing probe.

Mr. Balladur, who is expected to announce this month that he will run for president in the April/May election, handsomely recovered after his main rival, outgoing Socialist European Commission President Jacques Delors, dropped out of the race.

Decisive action in the

dramatic Christmas hijacking of an Air France airliner by Algerian Muslim fundamentalists sent his popularity soaring. French police killed the four hijackers and saved the life of the 170 hostages.

An opinion poll last week showed Mr. Balladur would defeat any potential presidential contender by margins unprecedented in French presidential elections of 22 to 48 percentage points.

A survey published Sunday in the weekly Journal Du Dimanche said a majority of French voters believed he should announce his candidacy as soon as possible.

His fellow-Gaullist rival Jacques Chirac, the Paris mayor, is the only major contender to have officially said he would run for the succession of Socialist President Francois Mitterrand.

Maverick rightist anti-Maastricht campaigner Philippe de Villiers, who won 12.4 per cent of the vote in last year's European Parliament elections, was expected to announce his candidacy later Sunday.

The Socialists, shellshocked from Mr. Delors' surprise defection, are still bickering over who should be their candidate. Former Education Minister Lionel Jospin stepped forward last week and offered to run.

U.K. vows to veto EU constitutional changes

LONDON (R) — Britain will refuse any significant new constitutional changes in the European Union for the foreseeable future, Prime Minister John Major said Sunday.

He told BBC Television he would veto any moves to tighten the political bonds between EU member states at the key inter-governmental conference (IGC) next year.

"If anything that involves significant constitutional changes were raised in the 1996 inter-governmental conference, we the British would not accept it," he said.

"I don't think the time is appropriate now for constitutional change."

The IGC is designed to build on the Maastricht Treaty, signed by European Community leaders in 1992, which agreed closer political and economic ties between member states.

A deep rift that treaty caused in the ruling Conservative Party is still gaping and Mr. Major, hoping to

defuse a rebellion by anti-European parliamentarians, has gradually toughened his stance towards the EU.

The prime minister, often accused of weak leadership, told interviewer David Frost that he would "of course" lead his party into elections due in 1997.

Constitutional changes in the EU could include abolishing the veto each country has on important matters, extending qualified majority voting, bestowing massive new powers on the European Parliament or making a firm commitment to a single EU currency, he said.

A single currency was unrealistic in the next couple of years and Britain would certainly not join, he said.

But if any as yet unforeseen change "wiggled through" his opposition at the IGC, he might put it to British voters in a referendum.

"The high tide of federalism... is now on the decline. I have no intention of adding to it in the 1996 IGC so I will not accept constitutional change that impacts on the British parliament," he said.

Britain is pushing for a looser but wider European Union, opening the doors to Eastern European countries can follow Austria, Finland and Sweden who joined on Jan. 1.

"My idea of the right sort of Europe is to extend Europe, not leave it as a cosy little pattern of Western European nations," Mr. Major said.

Last month eight diehard Euro-rebels, opposed to growing EU influence over national policy, were effectively cast out of the parliamentary Conservative Party for voting against a bill to boost EU funding, and a ninth followed them out in disgust.

Their excommunication technically leaves the unpopular Major with a minority government. But he said he was confident of winning a vote next week in which opposition parties will try to end Conservative chairmanship of key committees.

Mr. Major said he hoped the rebels, who were buoyed by a Sunday newspaper poll showing they had strong support among their voters, would prove their loyalty to his government in the coming weeks so they could be welcomed back into the fold.

He spent much of his first interview of 1995 defending his record, especially on the economy, and rounding on the main opposition Labour Party whose leader, under young new leader Tony Blair, has soared above 35 percentage points in polls.

"I find myself wholly unperturbed by (Blair's lead)," he said, and predicted Labour's lead would evaporate as the election neared, the economy improved and Mr. Blair's novelty faded.

Hurd arrives in Pakistan amid Kashmir controversy

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived for a two-day visit to Pakistan Sunday to face an angry reception over his reported remarks backing Indian policy in the disputed region of Kashmir.

"I have not been properly reported," Mr. Hurd said in Lahore, southeast of here, responding to his arrival from New Delhi to charges he had implicitly accused Pakistan of aiding militants in Indian-held Kashmir.

Mr. Hurd said he had spoken of ending external support for Kashmiri militants "if at all there is any," and that he supported a political process in Kashmir including elections to elect "genuine people who have credibility."

The Foreign Office here reacted angrily to his remarks at a press conference in New Delhi Saturday where he reportedly favoured an Indian move to initiate a "political process" in Kashmir to resolve the dispute over the border region.

Mr. Hurd was also quoted as saying that "Britain wants an end of external support to militancy" in Kashmir, and supported a

dialogue between Pakistan and India under the 1972 Simla Agreement signed by both sides.

The statement was interpreted here as an implicit accusation that Islamabad was aiding militants in Kashmir, over which India and Pakistan have fought two wars since their independence from Britain in 1947.

"The Kashmir crisis does not originate from external support to the so-called militancy," a Foreign Office spokesman said, adding that the violence was "entirely spontaneous and home-based."

India blames Pakistan for training and arming the militants, a charge denied by Islamabad.

The Pakistani Foreign Office said in a statement here overnight that the crisis in Indian-held Kashmir was the "consequence" of denying Kashmiri people their right to self-determination.

Mr. Hurd's statement, if reported correctly, was "at variance with history, law and reality in Kashmir," the spokesman said, adding that British observers had attested to the "complete alienation of Kashmiri people with Indian rule."

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
جوردين تايمز يومية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 667171/6, 670141-4

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Jump-starting foreign policy

JORDAN'S FOREIGN policy in the new era, as elucidated in His Majesty King Hussein's letter of appointment to Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, is a continuation of the Kingdom's decades-old policies of pursuing peace and good relations with every country that wants them with us. The King made clear to the prime minister that he wanted a foreign policy that aims at achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, improving the Kingdom's relations with Arab states and ensuring that the country's ties with world nations continue to be based on mutual respect and interest.

Perseverance in pursuing these policies despite the obvious odds is bound to lend greater credibility to Jordan's position and it will eventually lead to improving the Kingdom's standing among all world nations. Jordan's relations with other Arab states, strained as a result of the Gulf war and subsequent events, require a tremendous effort to put back on track. But we trust that that effort will be made concerted and intelligently, by the new foreign policy team guided by His Majesty the King and headed by Sharif Zeid, and the result can only be an improvement on what is happening already, if not outright success.

Paramount among Jordan's ties with other Arabs is the Kingdom's special relationship with the Palestinians. The Kingdom, as the King told the prime minister in the letter of appointment, pledges to continue to support the Palestinians' right to self-determination and to regaining their other legitimate rights under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Dialogue and coordination are the best tools to translate the King's words into action. And dialogue between Jordan and the Palestinian leadership is long overdue. True His Majesty has been in touch with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, even under difficult circumstances, but the time has arrived for the two sides to start implementing agreements already reached and to reach other agreements that continue to elude us.

On the front of Arab ties, Jordan can use its current presidency of the Arab League Council to advance the Arab reconciliation effort started by the league's secretary general, Esmat Abdel Meguid.

Jordan, which the King envisions as being a model in the rule in democracy and human rights, can still play a major role in the overall effort to reconcile Arab ranks, especially after Iraq met most of the conditions for lifting the U.N.-imposed sanctions.

In the final analysis, Jordan stands to benefit from cultivating its new standing as the first Mashreq state to make peace with Israel and help put an end to a conflict that has dragged on for too long. For this to happen, though, the world has to see that Jordan needs support and encouragement. The new government would do well to begin the process of opening eyes on this objective. Explaining and proving the soundness of Jordan's position thus becomes a top priority.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Sawt Al Shaab strongly attacked Russian President Boris Yeltsin for his continued aggression on the Chechen people. This war is no different from the onslaught which Mr. Yeltsin had launched on his predecessor Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev and his wars, motivated by the hope that he will receive U.S. assistance, said Arafat Hijazi. The writer said that the Russian war on the Chechens and the destruction of their country can win Mr. Yeltsin no glory or American financial help. Mr. Yeltsin is trying to do America a favour by fighting the Muslims under the pretext that they want to separate from the Russian Federation despite the Chechen people's repeated declarations that they would like to maintain the strongest possible and good neighbourly ties with Moscow, added the writer. The Western condoning of Mr. Yeltsin's aggression is a tacit approval of Western nations support for Moscow to annihilate the Muslims by any possible means and under any pretext, added the writer. The writer blamed the Muslim nations of the world for failing to help their Muslim brothers and sisters by trying to halt the aggression and the destruction of a Muslim nation.

A WRITER in Al Dustour welcomed a visit by a team from the Iraqi foreign ministry to Damascus, saying that the two sides are in bad need of each other's help in the light of the circumstances facing the Arab World. Saleh Qalab said that Damascus is finding it impossible to regain its lost territory without the help of the Arab states and so it organised a meeting with Cairo and Riyadh, which could have been instrumental in arranging for Baghdad and Damascus to reach agreement on joint action to end their enemy first and then work together towards regaining the lost Arab territory, said the writer. But, he said, without stopping the propaganda campaigns waged by Damascus against Baghdad and vice versa, and without ending the sanctions, which Syria is imposing on Iraq, little can be expected from such meetings. The writer expressed hope that the two neighbouring states would find a formula to overcome their side differences and embark on some kind of action that would revive solidarity among Arab states.

Human Rights File

Moscow's unjustified war

By Waleed Sa'di

IN COLD blooded terms, the armed and political conflict over Chechnya boils down to two basic issues: one is the right to preserve and protect the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation as clearly enshrined in international law and the other is the right of the people of Chechnya to exercise the right of self-determination as also equally enshrined in international law, especially in its human rights dimension. What the international community has to decide in the final analysis is whether the right of states in this context comes ahead of the right of peoples. The rule of thumb in contemporary international law is that the right of peoples to determine their future and destiny is of a superior value and when it comes in conflict with the right of states, it must be given priority and superiority in application.

This much Moscow, under the leadership of President Boris Yeltsin, does not seem to comprehend as it wages its war against the Chechen people who after all are only asking for their freedom to determine whether they wish to continue to be associated with the Russian Federation or not. It is no trivial matter to recall that the Chechens are a distinct people from the Russian people and enjoy a different religion and culture. There are hardly any grounds for President Yeltsin to cling to his imperialist posture that calls for the subjugation of a people that are for all intents and purposes alien to his own people.

Perhaps Moscow sees in the battle for Grozny a symbol for protecting its geopolitical objectives and interests, especially since Chechnya is known to have huge deposits of oil. Better still, President Yeltsin may see in winning the war over that Muslim country the guarantee to shore up his political fortunes amidst renewed attacks on his leadership by old and new enemies.

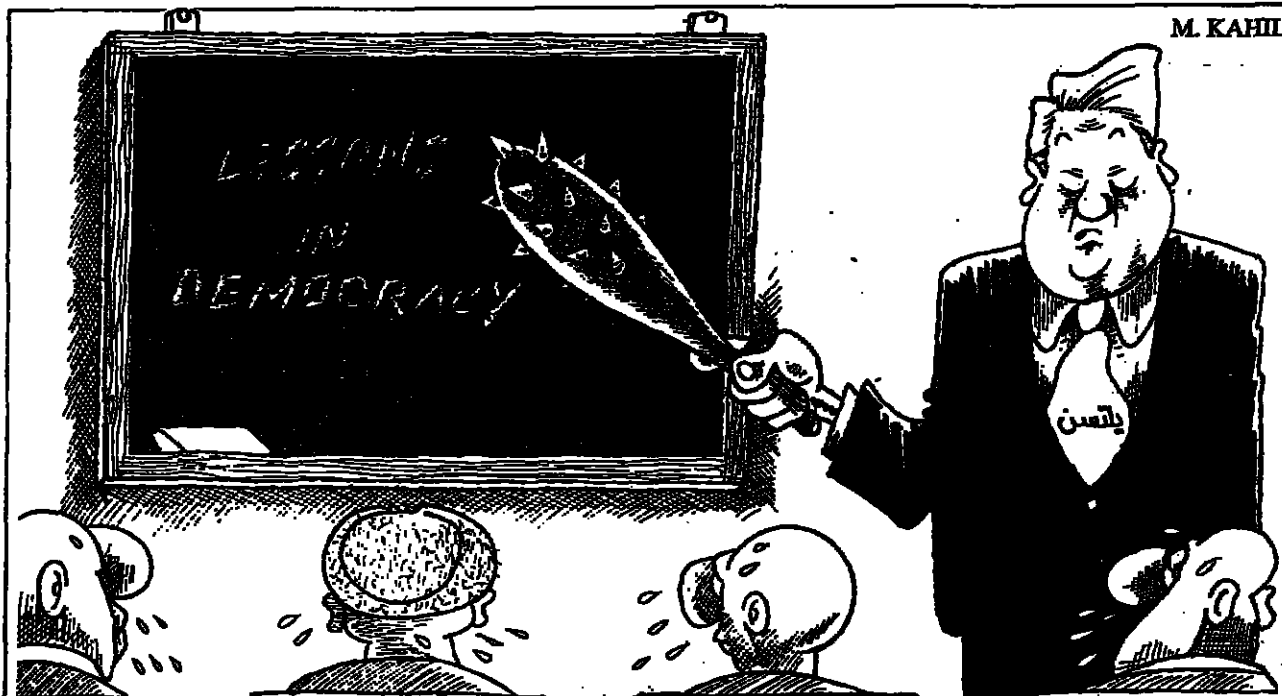
But Mr. Yeltsin is wrong to think that the war against Chechnya will boost his image. The image of the regime in Russia can be strengthened and improved if it heeds the lessons of history and upholds the democratic ideals, it says

it is predicated upon.

Moscow's support of an all out war against Chechnya is therefore flawed in every sense of the word and cannot be expected to hold much water in the face of the stubborn Chechen resistance.

Even if the invading Russian forces succeed in their mission to bring the Chechens to their knees and force them to accept to be part of the Russian Federation, the conflict will reemerge in the future simply because the Chechens will continue to demand their rights to self-determination. On the other hand, yielding to justice and fair play would bring new and even more important and lasting victories for Moscow. Suffice it to recall that forging new and more solid relationships with countries such as Chechnya stand to enforce the democratic path of new Russia and put it on a more stable course. Surely, Russia knows that the days of subjugations are gone and finished and that the yearnings of suppressed peoples for liberty can never be quashed for ever.

Of course, the international community would be the first to recognise Russia's strategic and regional needs for security. A free and democratic Chechnya can be expected to take this legitimate concern into consideration. The economic links between Moscow and its neighbouring states can also be expected to take deep root on the basis of the mutual benefits of the two sides. Meanwhile, Russia is called upon to free the Chechens from any imposed bondage by affording them a free and democratic opportunity to choose and determine their fate. An early Russian withdrawal from Chechnya, followed by the holding of a national referendum under international supervision, would be the right course to take in order to bring back sanity to the situation. President Yeltsin is well poised to exercise this option in view of his repeatedly declared commitment to human rights, including the right to self-determination.



BY A thousand different routes they are moving in. They come in search of jobs and homes — a better life. There are millions of them, but they appear in no statistics. The police can only catch a few and turn them back. They cannot stop this human tide, which will become even bigger in 1995. It is one of the largest movements of human beings in history.

The movement of people across China from the impoverished rural areas to the south and east coast cities will be one of the most significant events of the end of the millennium, according to Western experts on China. Compared to migration on this scale, the few Mexicans who slip across the U.S. border into California, the numbers of Africans who come to Europe from North Africa or east Europeans who move westwards are insignificant.

Helped by this illegal migration, China's economy is growing at nine per cent a year, transforming the world's second largest country from a peasant agrarian society into a world industrial power.

The emergence of China on to the world stage was marked by its successful demand to be a founding member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which was inaugurated as the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

China is still claiming status as a "developing country" which gives it certain concessions to protect its industries and agriculture. The U.S. and the EU are objecting on the grounds that it is already one of the world's top trading countries. Because of this dispute China may not be able to join the WTO until later in the year, but it is serving notice that it is not simply its nuclear capacity which merits a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

In recent years, Beijing foreign policy has appeared different and remote, but after the death of Deng Xiaoping, which has been described as "imminent" for some time, China is in for a change of leadership and an inevitable reassessment of its past and future policies. World leaders are re-

A troubled world primed to explode

Richard Dowden sees money and trade as increasingly dominant forces in 1995, while politicians retreat from global responsibility

markable by their absence from the stage now. In Washington, President Bill Clinton has been hobbled by the victory of the Republican right in the November elections. France will have a new President in May. In Britain, John Major is struggling to lead his own party. Japan is experimenting with a new electoral and parliamentary system, Italian politics are back in the melting pot, and in Germany Chancellor Helmut Kohl is into the last quarter of his game.

In Russia, however, the war in Chechnya is making President Boris Yeltsin look more like an old-fashioned dictator than a democrat. What other ambitions might Russia, in its present atavistic mood, have in the Caucasus?

The weakness of each leader has local causes, but it may not be a coincidence. Five years on from the end of the cold war, the world is beginning to realise that it was not the end of communism which caused most impact but the end of all political philosophy. In almost no country which holds elections is there any policy difference between parties about what is to be done, only about how. There is indeed no alternative.

Politicians did not suddenly discover a miraculous consensus, but they have lost or abandoned control of so much that once constituted government. The global movement of money and trade have put them beyond the regulation of any nation state. Governments now are mere managers trying to look good and make rules which will attract investor confidence in their patch.

In such a climate, can the state survive? What does national sovereignty mean? Politicians know that when their voters are frightened by the feeling that they are losing control, the sense of national sovereignty is a powerful emotion. They are also aware that in a competitive world only the most

disciplined workforces and societies will win. They, therefore, need to impose stricter rules on their citizens, but this the voters do not like. The feeling is strongest in America, where the anti-government vote is almost a majority. The loss of identity at the end of the cold war, the lack of political ideas, the decline of the nation state and the power of national governments all contribute to defensive individualism that does not bode well for international understand-

the Atlantic generation, which knew the importance of U.S. intervention in two world wars, dies off. In Europe, the newly enlarged union will be preparing for the intergovernmental conference to be held in 1996, but the vital questions on further enlargement eastwards to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak republics must be decided this year. Throughout Europe there has been an increasing disillusionment with the Maastricht vision and the idea of



ing, let alone solidarity.

Regional economic blocs are a halfway stage and a buffer between the individual nation-state and the big wide world: 1995 will be a testing time for several of these blocs. The North American Free-Trade Agreement will be receiving its first returns shortly and the verdict of the "America First" Republicans on whether it has boosted exports or destroyed jobs will be crucial.

What is now certain is that the U.S. and Europe will continue to diverge. The "special relationship" has all but evaporated as

a centralised European federation. Unpredictable events this year, edicts from Brussels and the way they are presented in the media, will determine whether Europe's weak leaders take refuge in nationalism or push on towards European unity.

In Africa too, the Southern African Development Community which joined South Africa with the old anti-apartheid economic coalition of the "frontline states" will also be reviewing its first year's successes and failure. If it works, and a peace agreement in Angola finally sticks, the SADC

could begin to transform the region, an effect which might gradually spread to the rest of the continent.

In Japan this year, the members of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation will discuss an agenda for lowering trade barriers and possibly building a Pacific trading bloc. Since this includes Japan and the U.S. as well as China, this should become the most powerful of all but its disparate politics make further cooperation more difficult. Whatever happens to APEC the increasing cooperation of Japan and the Asian "tigers" with China make this the most economically dynamic region of the world.

But do not forget that the regional blocs, political as well as economic, also indicate the failure of a global economic and security agreement. The new world order, the toast of the post-cold war honeymoon, has finally evaporated. The U.S. which should have led it, was frightened by its failure in Somalia and will not allow any of its soldiers to be put at risk outside its zone of interest again.

Because the U.S., Britain and France are the only countries in the world capable of delivering troops and equipment rapidly to a war zone, this retreat from global responsibility means that the United Nations peace-enforcing capacity is hobbled. By its 50th birthday this year, the U.N. may be reduced to a register of idealistic resolutions and a depository for the failures of the permanent members of the Security Council.

It may be able to police a few prearranged ceasefires but its ability to negotiate peace agreements, let alone impose them, is drastically diminished.

As if to symbolise this, Somalia will be finally abandoned to the clan war gangs at the end of March, when the last U.N. troops are due to leave. After billions of wasted dollars and the lives of over a hundred U.N. soldiers, Somalia will

Japan goes soul-searching

By Brian Williams
Reuters

TOKYO — Japan, looking down the barrel of a year when its World War II past comes under the glare of 50th anniversary scrutiny, is going through an intense period of soul-searching.

"Prescription for Japan: Time to change," "amnesia and amnesty at work in Japan," "dreams for another golden age depend on reform," "Japan's vitality is in danger," — these have already become familiar reading for Japanese in the first week of 1995.

The debate, the questioning, goes much further than the immediate anniversary focus of the August 6 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Japan's formal World War II surrender nine days later on August 15, 1945.

It is entangled in where Japan should be heading as it comes out of its worst modern recession, ironically leaving the country in a crisis about its future.

"If the 1980's taught the Japanese to celebrate their success, then the 1990's have provoked the most severe crisis of national confidence since 1945," the Japan Times said in a new year's day article.

"Is Japan's economic prosperity ending. Will the nation now decline. These timid questions are being heard in various sectors of society," the country's largest-selling newspaper, the daily Yomiuri said in its new year's day editorial.

For some foreigners, eyeing Japan's status as a country where Tiffany's can have a branch in a provincial — if imperial — town like Kyoto, the angst seems out of time.

But for many Japanese, the wealth has left the question, "what now?" Hopes that reform of the country's political system over the past 18 months would lead the nation to answers have dribbled away

into apathy.

Opinion polls show the biggest winner if a general election were to be held now would be "undecided".

"The state of affairs on the political front makes us feel keenly that politicians are preoccupied with their own short-term political interests, to the neglect of the nation's medium and long-term needs," Yomiuri said. "There is no theme," a young woman journalist complains.

It is a comment repeated in most fissures of Japanese life, from where fashions are followed to where policy is made.

There is no total agreement in government about whether Japan should become a permanent of the United Nations Security Council, if invited, because the cost could be too high in emotions and lives, not money.

There are signs that even a type of "press leak" war appears to have broken out between some ministries and between politicians and the country's famed bureaucrats about where the country should be going.

In an end-of-1994 spate that summed up the infighting, Science and Technology Agency Minister Makiko Tanaka took the unusual step of publishing a row between her and the agency's top bureaucrat about who ran the department.

"I was cautioned... (to) be very careful when speaking about administrative reforms, because government bodies are public entities and not under your personal control," she said the bureaucrat told her.

"Should we cling to old modes of thinking and outdated institutions. The peace and prosperity we enjoy would certainly become things of the past. In this sense, the nation faces a historic turning, with its very fate at stake," the Yomiuri editorial said.

become again a no-go land for the rest of humanity.

A more terrible catastrophe is unfolding in the refugee camps of eastern Zaire, where some two million Rwandans are camped, angry and vengeful. As the prospects for their peaceful return lessen by the day, there is an increasing likelihood that they will launch guerrilla raids into Rwanda, reducing the area to a state of permanent ethnic war. How long will the rest of the world provide food and assistance in such circumstances?

Liberia too is running out of grace. Its five-year civil war, now a battle between well-armed gangs of uncertain allegiance, has also exhausted the West African peacekeeping force and the donors which support it.

The fear is that this is the beginning of a trend, a continent-wide violent reordering of power in Africa in which millions will die. So far, the man-made catastrophes have been in small and unimportant countries, but what happens when a country like Nigeria catches fire? It is as close to civil war as it can be, while its military rulers seem to be devoting their energies to stealing from the state and stamping on any signs of dissent.

The failure to protect Bosnia is another example of the inability of Britain, France and the U.S. to fulfil the obligations of the U.N. Charter.

This year will determine whether the fig leaf of staying on in a humanitarian capacity can be kept in place, or whether the Serbian militants will finally dispense with the charade and kick out UNPROFOR altogether. Will Bosnia exist this time next year?

But a new danger to Europe, and France in particular, is brewing in North Africa. An explosion in Algeria will send millions of people across the Mediterranean. The new pieds noirs are culturally French but ethnically North African, and as refugees they will find they have fled Islamic fundamentalism to face European racism.

For Europe, an Algerian war and Algerian boat people may be the agonising cause in 1995.

The Independent

New government is sworn in

(Continued from page 1)

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Nader Thubeirat is the representative of the five-member parliamentary Ikha' (Brotherhood) bloc.

The five independent lawmakers who joined the government are Awad Kheifat (youth), Jamal Sarraf (post and telecommunications), Ali Abul Ragheb (trade and industry), Samir Habashneh (culture) and Mohammad Abu Olein (state).

Ultra-nationalist leftist deputies, like the IAF, stayed out of the government. They are represented by five deputies who voted along with the Islamists against the Oct. 26 peace treaty with Israel. IAF spokesman Hamzeh Mansour said the prime minister-designate "ignored the largest parliamentary bloc in the House" by failing to consult with them on the composition of the government.

Though Sharif Zeid met with IAF Deputy Abdul Rahim Al Okour and the overall leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdul Majid Thuneibat, the meeting did not discuss the formation of the government directly and Mr. Mansour said the meeting was with the Islamist movement and not with the IAF parliamentary bloc.

"That meeting did not concern us. The prime minister-designate ignored our parliamentary bloc," said Mr. Mansour.

There were earlier reports that Sharif Zeid was willing to offer the IAF up to two portfolios that would have included the portfolios of parliamentary affairs and state, but the offer was never made, according to sources close to the prime minister.

An influential IAF source told the Jordan Times Saturday that the group would not have accepted portfolios that did not correspond with its weight in Parliament and among the public at large. Leftist Deputy Bassam Haddadin quoted Sharif Zeid as telling representatives of fellow-leftist deputies Sunday that he did not offer ministerial positions to the IAF members "because they themselves did not want to participate and because they would form opposition within the government if they joined it."

The apparent displeasure of the IAF over "ignoring" them in the process of consultation for forming the cabinet seems to weaken earlier reports that the government would have good relations with the Islamists even though they would not join it. The IAF had expected the prime minister-designate would consult with them over his team, members of the group said.

Unhappiness with the government was also expressed by Mr. Haddadin who told the Jordan Times that he and his other two leftist colleagues, Khalil Haddadin and Mustafah Shneikat, believe the government "has only

one colour and is not representative of all the political trends in the country."

Bassam Haddadin and Mr. Mansour said they believed the new government was no different from its predecessors in terms of the political orientation of its members.

The new government includes three Jordanians of Palestinian origin — Dr. Khalaf, Minister of Energy Samir Darwazah and Minister of Social Development Salwa Damsan-Masri — as well as two Christians, Minister of Transport Samir Kassar and Minister of Finance Basel Jarrah.

Nine members of the government are from the central parts of the Kingdom, seven come from the south and equal number comes from the north. The cabinet includes one Circassian, one from the north east governorate of Mafrqa and two from the Bani Sakher tribe (central bedouins).

Sharif Zeid formed his first government in 1989 and his cabinet then, which included 24 ministers, supervised the first democratic parliamentary elections in the Kingdom in 23 years.

He formed his second government in 1991 after then Prime Minister Taher Al Masri resigned and his cabinet then won 47 votes of confidence from the 80-member House. That government was described as a right-of-centre government that lasted for about 18 months without any reshuffle or major change.

A 'soldier' with a political mission

By Salameh Ne'matt
Special to the Jordan Times

FIELD MARSHAL Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who Sunday formed his third government in six years, insists that he is no politician.

The 60-year-old former commander-in-chief of the armed forces said, in interview he gave in November 1993, that he was pushed to enter politics on Dec. 19, 1988, when he had to quit his job as army commander-in-chief and take the post of Royal Court Chief at the request of His Majesty King Hussein.

When in late 1993 the King jokingly told him "you have become a politician," Sharif Zeid, the veteran military commander, responded: "never sir, never."

Abu Shaker, as he is affectionately called by many, does not see a contradiction between his lack of interest in politics and his taking of the highest political posts in Kingdom: "I do not consider myself a professional politician. I am a professional soldier, which is the job I have chosen from the beginning." He says, "When I was commander of the armed forces, I was, in a way, in a military and a political post at the same time, because in Jordan, the prime minister and the minister of defence are usually the same person, and the commander of the army is the first soldier and serves as the link between the army and the political establishment."

Four months into his political career, following the violent riots of April 1989 (which forced the resignation of prime minister Zeid Rihawi's government), Sharif Zeid found himself forming a transitional government entrusted with holding the first general elections in 23 years.

Although the roots of the riots in the spring of 1989 were economic in nature, there had to be a political solution. King Hussein, who was at the time on an official visit to Washington, cut short his visit and returned to deal with the crisis. He felt the need for a new face at the helm of the government and a new concept for national security that would give more emphasis to socio-economic considerations, rather than politics alone. The King, who moved to defuse the crisis, found no one better for the job than Sharif Zeid.

In his November interview with the London-

based Al Hayat, Arabic daily, "Abu Shaker" reflects on how he found himself immersed in politics: "One day I was at the army headquarters in my military uniform, the next I came to the Royal Court in civilian clothes... There was no transitional period."

He confesses that he prefers military life to politics, despite his success as prime minister between April, 27, 1989 and Nov. 8, 1989 and then between November, 1991 and May 1993. "I felt I have done my best, but I did not enjoy my work as prime minister. It was not my choice, I did it because it was the wish of His Majesty the King."

After the November, 1989 elections, the veteran prime minister Mudar Badran, who had headed several governments between 1978 and 1984, was appointed to deal with the post-elections era, including an over-enthusiastic Parliament almost dominated by hardline Islamists and leftists. Mr. Badran immediately sought to contain and appease the Islamic opposition (which occupied 23 seats in Parliament), by handing the Islamic bloc five cabinet portfolios after a series of secret negotiations that were described as "consultations." Mr. Badran, at the time, saw that it was necessary to offer some "marginal concessions" to the then Muslim Brotherhood which represented the biggest single bloc in the House, with the aim of facilitating the government's work and passing laws proposed by the executive. But many wary politicians started wondering whether the government was containing the Islamic movement or the opposite.

With the launching of American efforts to convene a multi-party peace process in the summer of 1991, the King appointed Taher Masri, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin, to deal with the post-Gulf war phase and the beginning of the peace process. But the liberal Masri, even before announcing the names of his cabinet members, plunged into a confrontation with Parliament in which the Islamic bloc formed a coalition with East Jordanian establishment deputies (the Constitutional bloc) with the aim of undermining his government. The Thagha Hindawi group, headed by the Thagha Hindawi, was opposed, in principle, to a Jordanian of Palestinian origin heading the government. The Masri



"I do not consider myself a professional politician. I am a professional soldier, which is the job I have chosen from the beginning."

cabinet managed to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament only after the King intervened by summoning several members of the House to ask them, indirectly as usual, to back Mr. Masri.

But the premier, under pressure by a generally hostile Parliament, committed a political faux pas when he publicly declared, despite indications to the contrary, that his government would not be the one to negotiate with Israel. The King had announced a few days earlier, during a visit by then U.S. secretary of state James Baker, that Jordan would be the first to take part in peace negotiations.

After only five months in power, Mr. Masri's government, reeling under the accumulating pressures, resigned. Sharif Zeid returned to head yet another government. And as expected, he won a vote of confidence from Parliament despite the negative vote by the Islamic bloc. The Hindawi group, which was allied with the Islamists against Mr. Masri, backed Sharif Zeid despite hardly having any fundamental change in policies. It was clear that they were voting for the man and

not his political programme.

"Abu Shaker" does not deny that being a Hashemite and a cousin of the King has given him a sort of "immunity" and has helped him contain the political opposition in a way not possible for any other politician. He explains that "being a member of the Hashemite family certainly worked in my favour rather than against me, but His Majesty does not choose people because they are his relatives. Rather, he chooses them because they can do the job entrusted to them."

Politicians who worked with Sharif Zeid during his two terms, say that the man surprised them with his success in making the transformation from a military man to a politician.

"When he formed his first government, we thought that, being a military man and a member of the Royal Family, he would be dealing with us in a military and condescending style," says Mr. Hindawi, who served as deputy premier in Sharif Zeid's 1991-1992 cabinet. "But he was one of the most open and democratic premiers I have worked with."

that Sharif Zeid's Hashemite background was not the decisive factor in his success. When Sharif Hussein Ben Nasser was appointed prime minister in 1966, he could not keep his position for more than four months.

Mr. Hindawi denies allegations that Sharif Zeid also sought, in his second term, to appease the Islamists through secret deals which were reportedly responsible for the "truce" between the Islamists and the government.

The appointment of Sharif Zeid for a third term, despite his ambivalence about the job, underlines, once again, how indispensable the man has become for the King. "Sharif Zeid is perhaps the best option when the situation requires a very strong relationship between the government and the palace on the one hand, and the military/security establishment on the other," a prominent Jordanian says.

Observers believe these qualities are indispensable in the context of dealing with the repercussions of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel and building the foundations for future relations between Jordanians and Palestinians.

Sharif Zeid pledges to achieve goals

(Continued from page 1)

ensure that professional unions undertake the right responsibilities and perform the tasks that are expected of them, Sharif Zeid said: "We believe that these institutions' non-commitment to the decision of the majority of people would be a breach of national consensus."

The new prime minister also pledged to work towards restoring Arab solidarity, enhancing Jordan's international relations and promoting the Kingdom's role in all levels.

"We will give due attention to culture and information in a manner that would enrich the society's beliefs and principles," Sharif Zeid said.

Following is a Jordan Times translation of Sharif Zeid's letter to the King. I have received Your Majesty's letter of designation with deep appreciation and allegiance to your Throne. I have always served by your side as a soldier of the Great Arab Revolt, aiming to achieve the aspirations of the revolt and to ensure freedom and democracy for the Arab Nation.

Your letter designating me to be prime minister is a great honour I will always cherish as I always feel the pride of having accompanied you throughout my life.

The Kingdom is in dire need of strenuous efforts while it is at the threshold of a new stage, requiring every endeavour and energy for construction and for creative work.

Your Majesty has been offering sacrifices for your people and nation, particularly the Palestinian people and their cause, and you have spared no effort in defending the nation's rights in every field.

Your efforts have led to the restoration of Jordan's full rights in land and water as part of the overall endeavour for a comprehensive, lasting and just peace, and you continue to pursue efforts in defending the Palestinian people's rights and the holy places in Jerusalem.

The Jordanian Armed Forces, who bear the standards of the Great Arab Revolt and are true to its principles and goals, are resolved to pursue their efforts in defending the nation and therefore the Armed Forces would be given due care and attention by the government in terms of equipment and reorganisation.

The government will also give due care to the security services so that they will remain the shield of the nation, helping to ensure its security and stability and guard protecting democracy and freedom.

My government will give due care to the youth for whom it will facilitate education at the school and university levels in a manner that would cater to the needs of the future. The youth will be provided with education that would cater to the requirements of the modern age and their potential will be utilised in every possible way.

The government will pursue the construction of infrastructure and provide social and health services in all regions of the country with fair distribution. But it will give priority to agriculture, will stimulate the national economy, will release the potential of the private sector, encourage investments in agriculture; industry, tourism and will protect the environment from pollution. Above all, it will give due attention to dealing with unemployment and poverty.

The new phase facing the country, which has been enhanced by democracy, makes it incumbent on the government to enhance the democratic process and we will be keen on cooperating with the legislative authority and helping lay the foundation of real parliamentary life in a manner that would help promote cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities.

We have sought peace which we achieved through the will of the people and was blessed by our national institutions.

We are confident that the various federations and professional unions would bear their own responsibilities towards peace and the nation and would abide by the country's laws. We believe that these institutions' non-commitment to the decision of the majority of people would be a breach of the national consensus and would not serve the interests of the nation or achieve its aspirations.

Therefore the question of public freedom would be given due care by the government to ensure individual freedoms and rights.

We are keen on protecting political pluralism and are committed to the rule of the laws stated by the Constitution and the National Charter.

We will give due attention to culture and information in a manner that would enrich the society's beliefs and principles.

The government will seriously work towards protecting the independence of the judiciary and promote its capabilities with all the possible and available means and qualified cadres to enable it to play its role in serving the nation with justice.

The government is keen on promoting the Jordanian role in the Arab World and will work towards achieving solidarity, integration and unity among Arab states, transcending all side differences and disputes so that the nation can confront the coming challenges.

The government will also take due care to enhance strong relations with the Islamic and friendly nations and will try to promote Jordan's role at the regional and international levels.

The royal letter of designation to the government would serve as a set of guidelines for the government's mission ahead and would work out a clear programme to achieve that goal, seeking to establish social justice, tolerance, pluralism, reform in economy and education.

But the government would seek Your Majesty's advice in all matters at all times.

I do hereby present the names of my colleagues in the new government hoping that Your Majesty would endorse the list of the new ministers.

Zeid Ben Shaker Sharif Zeid and the Cabinet members all were sworn in before King Hussein at the Royal Court.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by outgoing Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ali, Prince Hamzeh, and Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Chief Chamberlain Prince Raad Ben Zeid and Prince Ali Ben Navef. Newly appointed Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem and the King's advisors also attended.

Earlier, King Hussein received at the Royal Court the outgoing prime minister and his Cabinet and thanked them for their dedicated efforts to serve their country and people.

A Royal Decree was also issued Sunday appointing Mr. Qasem as chief of the Royal Court with immediate effect.

Ciller to democratise constitution

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Premier Tansu Ciller has outlined plans to modify and democratise the 1982 constitution she inherited from the military, to offset Western criticism of Ankara's human rights record.

In a statement released by her government's press service, Ms. Ciller promised to lift restrictions on freedom of expression which still exist in

Turkish law. Ms. Ciller has long attempted to advance Turkey's case for joining the 15-member European Union (EU) but has been rebuffed because of the human rights violations in the country.

Ms. Ciller notably underlined the necessity of a change in article 14 of the constitution, which forbids the "misuse" of freedoms

and fundamental rights to allow linguistic, racial or religious discrimination.

The article is used to justify clampdowns on pro-Kurdish activities.

Ms. Ciller said she also hoped Turkish political parties would create branches for women and young people as well as allow students and universities to join parties,

PLO, Israeli government seek to defuse scandal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israeli government joined ranks Sunday in an effort to defuse a political scandal over their alleged coordination in the last elections.

The right-wing opposition Likud bloc, accusing Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of collusion with a group which was still Israel's enemy at the time of the 1992 polls, called a meeting of its leaders to adopt a formal stand.

The political storm erupted Saturday after Israeli Radio broadcast extracts from a book written by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), a key PLO negotiator of the autonomy accord he himself signed in September 1993 after secret talks in Norway.

Abu Mazen, in "The Road to Oslo," writes of an understanding between the PLO and Mr. Rabin's Labour Party to work for its electoral victory against Likud. The PLO would, discreetly, encourage the 800,000 Israeli Arabs to vote Labour.

The PLO and Labour held secret talks in the run-up to the poll, he writes.

The key encounter took place in Israel in April 1992, during which PLO envoy Said Kanaan expressed "satisfaction with the Labour Party platform" and offered "help to win the elections."

and then went back on it.

His interlocutor Ephraim Sneh, who is now health minister, acknowledged meeting Mr. Kanaan but said any talk of an electoral coordination was "rubbish and nonsense."

The scandal has come at a bad time for Labour, already reeling from opinion polls in which it trails far behind Likud, an opponent of the peace process with the Palestinians.

On the Palestinian side, Ahmad Tibi, advisor to PLO leader Yasser Arafat, denied the account at a press conference in East Jerusalem saying it was "completely baseless."

"The PLO has never intervened in favour of the Labour Party in these elections and rejects the accusations of interference in Israeli affairs, made by parties opposed to the peace process," he said.

Dr. Tibi acknowledged, however, that minutes of contacts between the PLO and Labour had been inserted into a resume of Abu Mazen's book in Beirut and would be removed in the next edition.

U.S. pilot's release rescues N. Korea nuclear deal

By Patrick Worsnip
Reuters

WASHINGTON — By negotiating the release of its downed helicopter pilot in North Korea, the U.S. administration has rescued its nuclear deal with Pyongyang, a centrepiece of Washington's foreign policy.

Sources close to the administration say North Korea had been told firmly that it would be difficult to proceed with the landmark accord unless the pilot, chief warrant officer Bobby Hall, was freed quickly.

Congress has no formal power to stop the agreement as such, but Republicans had warned they could seek to block funding for one of its first provisions — supply of heavy oil to North Korea.

The oil is to compensate Pyongyang for loss of energy as a result of its agreement two months ago to freeze its nuclear programme. North Korea will also eventually receive new nuclear reactors that produce less bomb-making plutonium than its present models.

Friday's release of Mr. Hall, whose helicopter came down just inside North Korea on Dec. 17, now makes such action by Congress unlikely, a point indirectly acknowledged by Thomas Hubbard, the U.S.

envoy sent to Pyongyang to resolve the incident.

"(North Korea) has up to now faithfully implemented its part of the agreed framework and we believe that it is in our interest that we do the same and we are therefore pleased that we can now look to the future and implement the important project," Mr. Hubbard said.

Key figures such as Senate Republican leader Bob Dole have said they plan to subject the agreement — which some regard as a poor deal for the United States — to close scrutiny at congressional hearings.

But the administration is certain to argue that there is little alternative to the pact, which U.S. leaders say has averted a dangerous nuclear crisis in East Asia.

Under the agreement, spent fuel from North Korea's old graphite-moderated reactors will be shipped out of the country, preventing its use in nuclear weapons.

South Korea is to foot the bulk of the \$4 billion bill for the new light-water reactors.

Despite agreeing to hand over Mr. Hall, Pyongyang has extracted several concessions from the United States in its drive for political recognition from Washington, analysts said.

To see what Hall's release, the State Depart-

ment was obliged to send the most senior U.S. official ever to visit the secretive communist state. Mr. Hubbard is deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

Under the terms of the deal, Washington also expressed its "sincere regrets" over the helicopter incident which the United States says was due to navigational error but North Korean official media charged was an act of espionage.

And the two sides have agreed to hold future meetings in an "appropriate forum" to discuss how to prevent such incidents in the future. U.S. officials said a dispute could be shaping up over what this forum should be.

Washington will argue that the existing military armistice commission, which has overseen the armistice on the Korean Peninsula since the Korean war ended in 1953, is the best forum. North Korea is expected to push for purely bilateral talks.

The difference is a largely symbolic but important one. The military armistice commission is under U.N. auspices and includes South Korean representatives.

Washington is holding out full diplomatic relations as a prize North Korea can obtain when the nuclear agreement has run its course in several years.

Arabs press on with ambitious trade date project

U DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are pressing ahead with an ambitious project to bolster flagging intra-trade that has remained a stonewall for years. The project, which aims to achieve economic integration, is being led by the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the main regional financial institution, which is carrying out the trade data network, part of a \$500 million project created five years ago to enhance commercial exchanges among Arab nations. The first two stages of the project, which involved the computerized network, launched three years ago, have been completed and the final stage will be finished shortly. The third stage involves linking the data network with its member states and will be completed early this year, an AMF statement said.

The network will distribute information to the Arab League's 22 members on prices, products, demand, supply, and the economy of each member state, being set up with the help of the World Trade Centre and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The network runs parallel to another AMF-sponsored project involving the creation of a computerized data base to develop resources in the region as part of the AMF's plans to help member states in implementing reforms. AMF officials said the data network would help boost intra-trade among Arab countries, which is one of the major obstacles blocking the movement of goods among them. Other obstacles are political rifts, funds shortage, customs barriers and poor infrastructure. Political rifts have also been blamed for the low level of intra-trade, which has extended to \$250 million in trade compared with its potential financing capacity of \$1 billion.

The fund, the Arab Trade Financing Programme (ATFP), covers only home-made products, except oil, with the aim of encouraging local exporters. The Abu Dhabi-based AMF has subscribed half its capital while the rest has come from other regional financial institutions and banks. Officials have indicated its capital could be increased in future if there was a strong demand and it proved effective in activating intra-Arab trade. AMF figures showed trade among the 22 members has remained below 10 per cent of their total trade over the past two decades. Despite ATFP loans, intra-Arab exports declined to nearly 7.3 per cent of the total Arab exports in 1992 from 9.1 per cent in 1989 and intra-Arab imports fell to 7.2 per cent from 10 per cent, according to the AMF. The decline occurred despite a 6.6 per cent growth in Arab exports to \$107.6 billion in 1992 and 5.1 per cent in imports to \$136.4 billion. In the energy sector, intra-Arab oil trade did not exceed 69,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 1994, only 0.4 per cent of the total Arab oil exports, according to the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC). A recent study by the AMF on the low intra-Arab trade also blamed administrative restrictions and the absence of what it called supporting services like financing, guarantees, information and promotion campaigns. "Among the main factors that help boost trade among Arab states is the provision of credible information and statistics on markets, demand, trade laws, financial position of potential buyers and other information," it said. "This has prompted the AMF to launch a project to set up an advanced data network that will be linked to all Arab markets."

Qatar signs LNG pact with Turkey, eyes China

DOHA (R) — The head of Qatar's ambitious liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects signed a letter of intent Sunday to supply LNG to Turkey and also forecast major sales to China and Thailand. The letter of intent with Turkish state-owned pipeline firm Botas develops a government-to-government memorandum of understanding signed Saturday, providing for two million tonnes a year of LNG with a Turkish option to double that. It was signed on the Qatari side by Jaber Al Marri, chairman of the Ras Laffan Liquefied Gas Co. (Rasgas) and director-general of the government's Qatar General Petroleum Corp (QGPC). Mr. Marri said the letter "gives a solid basis for the Ras Laffan project to get off the ground."

"We are confident that the letter of intent we have signed will be translated into firm sales-and-purchase agreements before December, and we are going ahead with the Ras Laffan project," Mr. Marri told Reuters. Mr. Marri said he was setting off for China late Sunday to discuss the sale of 2.5 million tonnes a year of LNG there, with an option for another two million tonnes. It was the first time a quantity was mentioned for China. He will also visit Thailand to discuss the supply of two million tonnes a year, he added. The tempo has picked up in the past two months in the drive to win the necessary long-term customers for Rasgas to get off the ground. QGPC owns 70 per cent of Rasgas, and Mobil Corp the rest. Rasgas — the second of Qatar's multi-billion-dollar LNG projects, designed to exploit the Gulf emirate's enormous gas reserves — now has letters of intent to supply nine million tonnes of LNG with an option for two million more.

Unions see million jobless in eastern Germany Bonn's chief 'wise man' sees better '95 growth

BONN (R) — Brushing aside recent downbeat sentiment about the strength of Germany's economic recovery, the head of Bonn's "wise men" was quoted Sunday as saying that GDP growth in western Germany could reach three per cent in 1995. Herbert Hax, of Bonn's Independent Council of Economic Advisers, told the Sunday Express newspaper that predictions so far had been "too pessimistic," though he conceded that dangers still lurked in the form of inadequate capital investment. Only last Thursday, the leading DIW economic research institute predicted that economic recovery would begin to slow this year after a stronger-than-expected expansion in 1994 as high interest rates choked off domestic investment. The DIW conservatively put west German gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 1.75 per cent this year, down from the 2.5 per cent forecast for 1994.

But Mr. Hax, chairman of the panel dubbed the "five wise men," said: "I consider this appraisal too pessimistic. The developments in the last three months indicate that the prospects are even better now than they were in the autumn, in my view." Mr. Hax said that for west Germany alone, real growth of 2.5 per cent to three per cent was "quite possible." In its annual report issued in November, the council forecast pan-German GDP growth at a projected three per cent in 1994 and three per cent in 1995. It predicted that GDP in west Germany had risen by a projected two per cent last year and would rise 2.5 per cent in 1995. It saw east German GDP growing 9.5 per cent in 1994 and nine per cent this year. Mr. Hax warned in the Express interview that the largest stumbling block to recovery were high wage costs and high personal and corporate taxes that were shackling investment. "Germany desperately needs investment. A lot of that depends on wage costs, but not only on them," he said. "The tax burden is a great impediment, with regard to not only employers but also employees, in creating jobs and boosting consumption." The DIW institute blamed European central banks for impeding long-term recovery by failing to "decouple" from monetary-policy developments in the United States. The DIW forecast that pan-German GDP would expand by two per cent this year, slowing from a projected three per cent in 1994. Apart from 1.75 per cent GDP growth in the West this year, the DIW said that in former communist eastern Germany, the surge in economic growth would slow to 7.5 per cent in 1995 from a projected nine per cent last year. The German Federation of Unions (DGB) said in Berlin that it expects there will be a million unemployed workers in former East Germany from this year until the end of the century. There were 980,448 unemployed workers in that part of Germany in November, out of a total of 3.43 million in the whole country, and that was the first time since June 1991 that the figure for eastern Germany dipped below a million. The unemployment rate in former East Germany stood at 13 per cent in November against 13.3 per cent in October. It had been 15.1 per cent in November 1993. DGB vice-president Ursula Engel-Kiefer said the five present Laender that constituted East Germany will have an average of 6.2 million jobs between now and the end of the century, but employment there will not return to the 1992 level until the year 2003. Basing herself on Labour Office data, Ms. Engel-Kiefer said she allowed in her figures for an annual economic growth rate of 10 per cent in eastern Germany — but the effects of such growth on employment will be attenuated by greater rationalization, she said. She added that productivity in former East Germany would come up to the level in former West Germany in the year 2010. Finally, gross per-capita income will amount to 3,800 marks (\$2,500) in eastern Germany in the year 2000, she said, 14 per cent below the level in western Germany at that time.

into a bitter joke. The government had promised monthly inflation of seven per cent by the end of 1994. December's reality was a monthly rate of 16.4 per cent, the highest since the start of the year and up from November's 14.1 per cent. New budget drafts envisage average monthly rates of three per cent this year, but economists say even this may be very hard to achieve unless the crisis ends to an early end. The ruble and domestic interest rates have been two early casualties of rising Russian inflation. The central bank raised its key refinancing rate to a nine-month high of 200 per cent Friday, from 180 per cent. Under Russian rules of calculating interest rates the rate works out at around 16.7 per cent a month, just above December's 16.4 per cent inflation rate but well below Moscow's December inflation of 25.6 per cent. Asked why the bank had

raised its rate, central bank spokesman Alexander Sitin said: "Just look at inflation." The ruble fell to 3,661 to the dollar on the Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange Friday, from 3,623 on Thursday and 3,550 at the end of last year. Dealers said the central

bank had spent at least \$220 million over the last two days in currency market intervention to prevent a bigger ruble drop. "The central bank is not in a position where it can afford to spend massive amounts of foreign exchange, an economist said."

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Chechenya campaign casts shadow over Russian reform

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's Chechenya campaign is casting a dark shadow over economic reform, amid fears that it could scupper chances of turning round an ailing economy and bringing inflation down. "The Russian economy has started to feel the consequences of the Chechen crisis," Interfax News Agency Friday quoted President Boris Yeltsin's top economic aide as saying. "It is not only the direct cost of restoring the economy of Chechnya ... but more importantly expectations of inflation are rising," Alexander Livshits said. "In the next two or three months at least 85 per cent of company directors will raise prices for their products. In the autumn this was not more than 50 per cent." Officials have already admitted they will need extra money to pay for the military operation and to rebuild a regional oil-based economy devastated by Russian bombing raids. "We will need endless tril-

ions of roubles to repair what has been destroyed and to make the republic look civilised again," a parliamentary budget official said. Fuel and energy ministry officials have already drawn up plans to repair Chechen oil wells and equipment, and they hope to bring annual oil output back to 1991 levels of four million tonnes. Chechnya declared unilateral independence in 1991. But economists fear extra expenditure from the fighting and the reconstruction work will widen the budget deficit and drive inflation up. "The economic situation in Russia is already very vulnerable and Chechnya has not helped a bit," one Western economist said. "It does cast doubts on Russia's ability to sustain a course of economic stabilisation in 1995." The government's 1995 budget draft originally promised to bring monthly inflation down to one or two per cent by the second half of this year. But this forecast, like those for 1994, soon turned

into a bitter joke. The government had promised monthly inflation of seven per cent by the end of 1994. December's reality was a monthly rate of 16.4 per cent, the highest since the start of the year and up from November's 14.1 per cent. New budget drafts envisage average monthly rates of three per cent this year, but economists say even this may be very hard to achieve unless the crisis ends to an early end. The ruble and domestic interest rates have been two early casualties of rising Russian inflation. The central bank raised its key refinancing rate to a nine-month high of 200 per cent Friday, from 180 per cent. Under Russian rules of calculating interest rates the rate works out at around 16.7 per cent a month, just above December's 16.4 per cent inflation rate but well below Moscow's December inflation of 25.6 per cent. Asked why the bank had

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Mexican bank woes add new twist to peso drama

MEXICO CITY (R) — Mexican banks have become the latest casualty of last month's peso devaluation, and analysts say only government intervention may save some of the smaller banks from lapsing this year. The slowing economy, high inflation and climbing interest rates — projections for 1995 laid out by the government last week — are about as bleak as it gets for a banking sector that is already stricken by problem loans. Analysts say most banks are badly weakened by the 20 devaluation, and that they may only survive the

year if the government bails them out, or if foreign rivals buy them up at fire-sale prices. "Clearly, investor confidence is at a nadir right now. I don't know how much worse it can get," Donald Gabbai, Mexican bank analyst at Standard and Poor's Corp, the U.S. rating agency, told Reuters in a telephone interview. "But we think Mexico has a very supportive system. It wouldn't allow a bank, even a small bank, to go under." At first overshadowed by the larger crisis affecting the country as a whole, Mexican

bank Travels came into the spotlight last week as fears mounted over their solvency. Mexican stocks and the country's currency, the peso, fell sharply on Friday on fears that some of the bank's international creditors were turning off badly-needed credit lines and demanding repayment. Those fears centred on lower-tiered banks. Shares of Banpais, a mid-sized Monterrey bank which Mexican analysts say has been sloppily managed and in trouble for months, tumbled 46.05 per cent on the Mexican stock market.

Late Friday, the highest flyers in Mexico's banking industry were also shot down. Moody's Investors Services Inc, the U.S. rating agency, downgraded long-term dollar debts of Banamer and Bancomer, Mexico's two biggest banks. The rating action will make it much harder for those banks to raise funds in international markets to help tide them over through the country's cash crunch. Explaining its actions, Moody's said the peso's slide had damaged the already precarious health of the banking system. It also said some

banks may need help from Mexico's financial authorities to honour their foreign currency debts. Preparing for the worst, Mexican officials are already making contingency plans to deal with bank emergencies that they say will include extra financing funnelled through the bank bail-out fund Fonapora. On Thursday, Finance Minister Guillermo Ortiz said Mexico would increase the stake foreign banks are allowed to invest in their Mexican counterparts. Mexican banks have scrapped their own expansion

plans. "Our restructuring plan was based on the consideration that there would be important loan growth this year," Eduardo Garcia Lecuna, a top official for Mexico's third largest bank, Banca Serfin, said recently. "Now that we don't think our portfolio will be growing, we won't need as much capital." As the immediate shock of the 30-40 per cent devaluation turns into a slow, painful slog back toward recovery, experts warn that even more serious perils lurk for the banks in the form of slow economic growth.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Get busy with your career plans and show that you are dynamic before noon. The afternoon Venus square Mars aspect puts a damper on relationships making people irritable, impulsive and self-indulgent.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be careful of making a monetary mistake in the morning. Then you can go about getting your talents expressed nicely.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Talk matters over with your loved ones since you are not thinking clearly now and get right answers. Extend invitations to important people.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A secret worry could deter you from accomplishing something important, if you do not snap out of it. Think and grow.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Early, plan just how to help a friend who is disturbed, and later you can have a jolly time with allies. Keep active.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Early morning talk with a powerful person could bring you real trouble, but later you can gradually get help. Show your abilities.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You get a good idea and want to toss aside those duties you have promised to handle, but carry through instead. Be happy.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) First handle some important responsibilities and then get out with generous friends and have a good time with them. Be happy.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't permit an irate partner to hold you back from accomplishing much in the outside world. Think big and you can get everything.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get your tasks completed early so that later you can be with those who can help you to advance more quickly in your occupation.

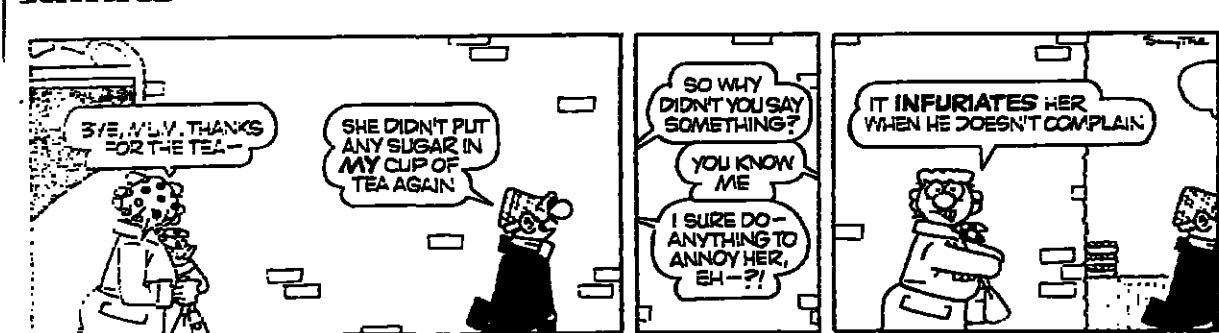
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Set up that appointment for fun early and then find better ways of keeping promises you have made to others. Show thoughtfulness to mate.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Forget that easy chair, get together with associates and accomplish a great deal today. Show your real abilities to higher-ups.

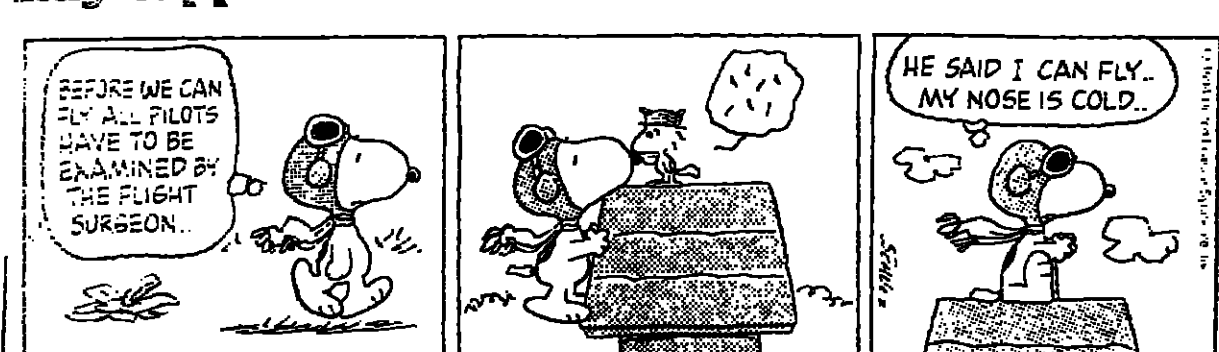
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Don't waste time shopping when there are much more important tasks to do as well as getting your environment more charming in the meantime.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

COMICS



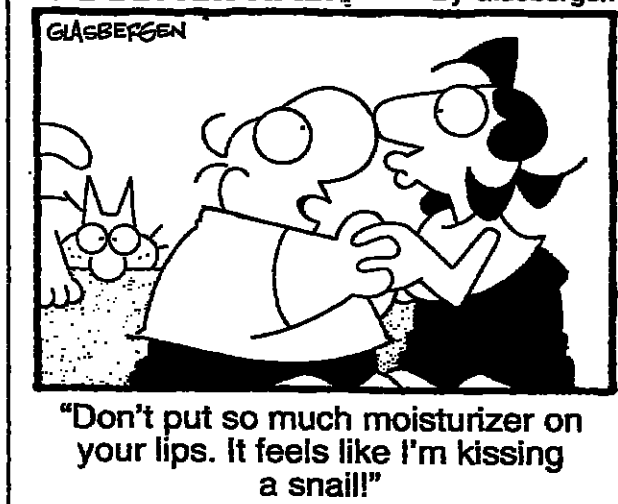
Reddy Capp



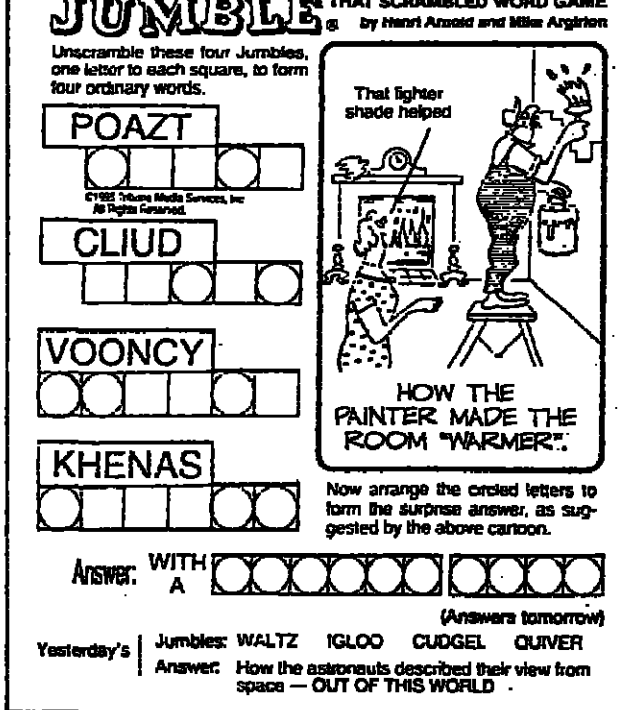
Just n' Jeff



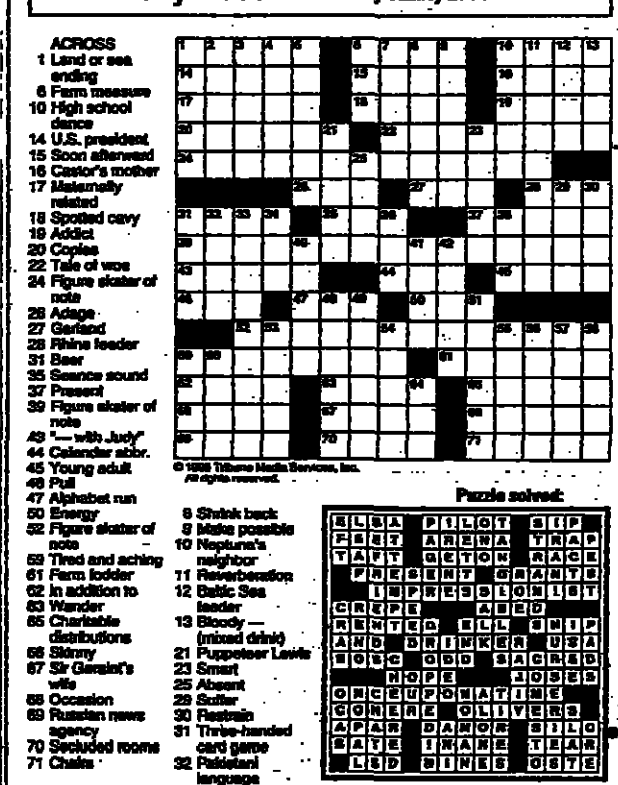
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by Stanley B. Whitten



Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Used shoes and clothes make better business

★ Retailers blame wholesalers for price rises and say this situation is something that should be taken for granted. Wholesalers, for their part, say that prices had risen at the suppliers' end and point out that children's clothes went up by 40 per cent because of higher cost of imports. A retailer gave an example of higher prices from wholesalers, saying a dozen Thai jeans cost JD 80 in the past, while now wholesalers are asking for JD 105 for the same amount. An owner of a shoe shop stresses that his businessmates had their shops closed and took up selling used clothes and shoes. "Thanks God, selling used clothes and shoes is a million times better than selling new shoes. In the near past I was eager to see anybody entering my shop, now people are eager to see me," he said.

★ It is rumoured that some banks are offering as high as 10 per cent interest on deposits since the Central Bank of Jordan sanctioned a rise in interest rates to defend the stability of the dinar. With rates that high on deposits, interest rates on loans and overdrafts may not stop at 12 per cent but could increase to 12 per cent + one per cent. Some observers fear lending rates may shoot up to 14 per cent or even 15 per cent by mid-1995 (Al Aswaq).

★ Based on an approval to raise the capital of the Jordan Investment and Finance Bank to JD 10 million, the bank has capitalised JD 4 million of the voluntary and special reserves as well as retained earnings. The capitalisation was carried out by giving shareholders, registered on Oct. 29, 1994, eight free shares for every nine shares they hold. The remaining JD 1.5 million of the capital increase will be floated in a private subscription to shareholders registered on Dec. 27, 1994 at JD 2.750 per share (one dinar per value + JD 1.750 premium). Further details will be announced at a later date (Al Ra'i).

★ Jordan will be joining 71 other countries grouped in the "agreement for facilitation of international maritime traffic" after obtaining a government approval in this regard. The agreement, which was enacted in 1967, aims at simplifying procedures for sea transport (Al Dustour).

★ A Jordanian maritime service company obtained an agency at the port of Gaza to transport goods to Jordan and on to outside markets. The company, which received approvals from the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Palestinian authority, has recently opened a branch in Ramallah. The branch will operate as the agent for Gaza port in Amman and as agent for Aqaba port in the Palestinian territories (Al Ra'i).

★ A 50,000-tonne shipment of maize arrived in Aqaba and will be distributed to poultry farmers by the Ministry of Supply after being checked to see it is fit for consumption (Al Ra'i).

★ Hashem Sabbagh has been appointed as an economic advisor to the prime minister. Dr. Sabbagh was director-general of the Amman Financial Market before being seconded to work in Oman (Al Dustour).

★ Jordan Steel shares were listed Sunday on the parallel market of the Amman Financial Market. Shares of real estate investment (Aqarco) and Zarka private university were suspended pending a decision on the premium to be charged for the increase in capital of both companies (Al Aswaq).

Study: British bond market fell 8% in '94

LONDON (AFP) — The Eurobond market fell by 8.0 per cent in 1994 when issues worth \$455 billion were made from a figure of \$496 billion in 1993, Euromoney said. The Eurodollar was the main currency used, by a wide margin, accounting for 40 per cent of new issues from 38 per cent in 1993 because the dollar was used as a store of value in troubled times. But in real terms the figure had fallen to \$185 billion from \$193 billion in 1993. Use of the Euroyen increased strongly because Japanese investors had become cautious about using foreign currencies in the light of losses they had incurred in 1993. Issues in yen increased by 38 per cent to the equivalent of \$82 billion which was 18 per cent of the total of issues throughout the world. But the role of European currencies had been severely weakened by turmoil in 1994. Issues in Euromarks had fallen by 44 per cent to \$30.4 billion. Eurosterling fell to third place, totalling \$30.9 billion. The issues denominated in sterling fell by 32 per cent. Issues in French Eurofrancs remained in third place, totalling \$24 billion which was 38 per cent less than in 1993. In sixth place was the Swiss franc, totalling \$22 billion, followed by the lira, totalling \$17 billion. The amount of lira issues rose by 44 per cent owing to a high yield offered on lira loans. The ECU, in eleventh place, fell short of a total of \$7 billion. Before Dances had voted against the Maastricht treaty for European Union in a first referendum in June 1992 the ECU had been the second most-used currency after the dollar.

Financial Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (January 2 - January 6, 1995)

AMMAN — The dollar appreciated sharply against other major currencies at the end of last week. It ended the week 0.90 per cent higher against the mark, 1.61 per cent higher against sterling and 1.09 per cent higher against the yen. While New York and European centres closed on official holiday Monday, the dollar appreciated against other major currencies Tuesday. The dollar appreciation came as a result of renewed expectations that the Federal Open Market Committee might tighten its monetary policy in its next meeting at the end of the month. These expectations were triggered by the release of National Association of Purchasing Managers prices index showing an increase from 77.9 per cent in November to 83.0 per cent in December, its highest level since March 1980. The dollar continued its appreciation against other major currencies Wednesday. The dollar's appreciation came on the back of rumours, later denied by the spokesman of the Russian president, that the Russian military forced Mr. Yeltsin to stop bombing Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. The dollar also rose on news that the U.S.-Japan trade talks will resume later this month. The dollar declined Thursday, however, as dealers liquidated their long dollar positions ahead of the release of U.S. employment figures the next day. Meanwhile, Japanese exporters contributed to the dollar's decline against the yen, as they took profits from the dollar's recent appreciation against the yen. At the end of the week, the dollar rose against other major currencies, especially the European currencies. Its rebound came in view of the release of U.S. employment figures showing a rise in non-farm payrolls of 256 thousand in December, compared to a revised rise of 488 thousand in November. Consequently, the unemployment rate fell from 5.6 per cent to 5.4 per cent in December. Rumours that the Russian president might resign, as well as expectations that the Fed might intervene to prop up short term interest rates later that day, also contributed to the dollar's appreciation. But the dollar's rise was capped by the intervention of European central banks to support their currencies. The U.S. unit, thus ended the week at 1.5635 marks, 101.38 yen and at \$1.5495 to sterling.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	30/12/94	6/1/95	Percent Change
Sterling Pound*	1.5665	1.5495	(1.09)%
Deutsche Mark	1.5495	1.5635	(0.90)%
Swiss Franc	1.3090	1.3100	(0.08)%
French Franc	5.3370	5.4000	(1.17)%
Japanese Yen	99.75	101.38	(1.61)%

30/12/1994 6/1/1995

Currency	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.87	7.62	5.56	7.56
Sterling Pound	6.00	7.87	6.00	7.75
Deutsche Mark	5.00	5.75	4.88	5.79
Swiss Franc	5.68	4.56	3.68	4.50
French Franc	5.62	6.87	5.50	6.87
Japanese Yen	2.25	2.53	2.25	2.62

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 6/1/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7030	0.7050
Sterling Pound	1.0880	1.0934
Deutsche Mark	0.4491	0.4513
Swiss Franc	0.5348	0.5375
French Franc	0.1301	0.1308
Japanese Yen*	0.6926	0.6961
Dutch Guilder	0.4003	0.4023
Swedish Krona	0.0430	0.0432
Italian Lira*	0.0430	0.0432
Belgian Franc	0.0430	0.0432

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Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7030	0.7050
Sterling Pound	1.0880	1.0934
Deutsche Mark	0.4491	0.4513
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Swedish Krona	0.0430	0.0432
Italian Lira*	0.0430	0.0432
Belgian Franc	0.0430	0.0432

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Islamic firms challenge life insurers

DUBAI (R) — Western-style life insurance, dismissed by some devout Muslims as immoral, is facing serious competition from Islamic insurers. Recent surveys show that Islamic insurance, similar in its operation to mutual funds, is gaining ground in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia has five Islamic insurance companies, the United Arab Emirates two and Bahrain and Qatar one each. The Qatar Islamic Insurance company, a general insurance company with a capital of 20 million riyals (\$7.6 million) started operating on Jan. 1. Another newcomer, the Dubai-based Islamic Insurance Company, says it offers an "Islamic alternative to life insurance," but has given no details. Western-style life insurance is rejected by Muslim puritans as a form of gambling, pawning or usury. Some hardline scholars even argue that life insurance is an attempt to defy fate — a sin for Muslims who believe that man's future is predetermined by God. But insurers challenge this view. "There is no similarity between gambling and life insurance because the risk and certainty of death already exists and is therefore non-speculative," said a study by Ajmal Bhatti, business development manager of the Bahrain-based Arab Insurance Group (ARIG). "Our existence as a life insurance industry is based on our belief in fate," Elias Fakhoury, American Life Insurance Company's Gulf chief, told Reuters. "We do not provide insurance against death as nobody can do this... the concept of life insurance is that of the economic human value," he added. Islamic insurance says it works on the principle of profit-sharing (modaraba), in which premiums are invested in instruments approved by Islamic Sharia law and returns on investment are not predetermined. In a modaraba contract, participants invest a fixed sum for a fixed term to be distributed between an investment fund and a so-called solidarity (takaful) fund, say

10 per cent of the total, which is the life insurance side of the contract. There is no direct return from a takaful contract but contributors get their money back from this cooperative-type fund in case of need, such as accident or death. Heirs are recognised in accordance with Islamic Sharia. Western-style insurance firms feel that the market in Gulf states is unresponsive since life insurance is offered as an "added bonus" to the more popular pension and medical insurance schemes. "Life insurance premiums are built into the premium structure of more acceptable schemes," said one marketing executive who declined to be named. Based on latest available published figures, annual per capita spending on life insurance in the Gulf region ranges from a low of \$3 in the United Arab Emirates to a maximum of \$14 in Kuwait — compared with \$1,645 in Japan, \$1,635 in the United States and \$530 in the European Union. "Net value of 1993 general

insurance premiums in the UAE was calculated at 1.5 billion dirhams (\$416 million) while life insurance premiums for the same period were 245 million dirhams (\$68 million)," said a study by Emirates Industrial Bank. "Rejecting life insurance is an excuse and not a reason. People may reject life insurance, but can they reject a cheque delivered to a widow or a widower every month... a freedom from the twin fears of living too long or dying too soon?" Mr. Fakhoury asked. "Whatever you want to call it, it is an income insurance, a basic human right that does not contradict any belief," he added. Mr. Fakhoury said the picture is changing in some Gulf countries where disputes arising from insurance policies are now subject to arbitration by trade courts and classified as civil contracts and not as matters to be handled by Sharia (religious) courts. Insurance industry sources in the UAE said a nationwide campaign to create public awareness in the traditionally dormant market was being studied.

Speculation against Saudi riyal surprises bankers

DUBAI (R) — Bankers and economists in Saudi Arabia said Sunday they were surprised by fresh speculation against the riyal despite a cost-saving 1995 budget. Some thought the speculation, mostly from banks in London and New York, was a snap reaction to the budget which forecast a \$4 billion deficit and revealed for the first time a budget gap of more than \$10 billion in 1994. Others thought it might be linked to fluctuations in world oil prices last week when the price of crude oil, the mainstay of the economy, dropped at one stage by 40 U.S. cents a barrel. But they stressed the speculation was not on the scale of previous attacks. The spot riyal, normally around parity of 3.75 to the dollar, has fallen to the region of 3.75/16 to the dollar — not a monumental change by comparison with floating currencies but substantial for one that has been fixed since 1986. "The position at the moment is extremely modest. The actual (price) movement is not great, but we have seen a lot of volume," one senior Saudi-based banker said. He said the one-year riyal

dollar swap rate had moved up about 50 points in the past two days to 180-200 points meaning someone who wants dollars in one year would have to pay 3.768 to 3.77 riyals instead of the parity of 3.75. "It has been three times that at other times like last year. It has moved in the last two days 50 points (upwards) but that is not a huge movement," he added.

The bankers, economists and diplomats agreed that the budget reflected Riyadh's determination to deal with its worst cash crunch for decades and said they were convinced the government had no plans to devalue the riyal. Deputy Finance Minister Saleh Al Omair Thursday was quoted as dismissing rumours of a possible devaluation. "The currency remains strong and the spending cuts have nothing to do with this (devaluation)," the daily Al Jazira quoted him as saying in an interview.

The bankers and economists said banks in the kingdom saw promising economic signs especially that the government has in the past week resumed delayed payments to companies.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 08/01/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK	2460	446530	183.750	183.750
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1825	7912	4.350	4.350
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	9449	39262	4.170	4.210
BANK OF JORDAN	1816	6780	3.750	3.750
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	11000	32450	2.920	2.950
JORDAN KHALAT BANK	650	1950	3.000	3.000
JORDAN GULF BANK	1950	3208	1.680	1.640
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	9450	15443	3.750	3.750
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	144	720	5.100	5.000
BUSINESS BANK	15250	55358	3.630	3.630
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	850	2536	4.850	4.610
BEIT ALAL SAVING INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	800	2607	3.270	3.260
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	7230	11098	1.540	1.540
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	583	2392	3.990	4.170
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	3979	6761	1.730	1.700
BANKS SECTOR	67136	655015	INDEX NUMBER: 159.28	CHANGE: -0.07%
ARAB UNION INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE	1250	3413	2.870	2.730
INSURANCE SECTOR	1250	3413	INDEX NUMBER: 138.21	CHANGE: +0.00%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	7705	12025	1.570	1.570
JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	155	155	1.510	1.510
TRIED DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	500	495	970	990
JORDAN MINERALS	5935	17916	2.920	2.950
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	3499	17715	5.080	5.080
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	950	3118	3.300	3.280
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	5000	12495	2.500	2.500
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	19900	26332	1.320	1.320
MACHINERY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	500	390	770	780
UNITED KIDDA EAST COMPOSITE HOTELS	7250	17975	2.480	2.480
ARAB ENTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	7500	25900	3.500	3.450
SERVICES SECTOR	59089	135125	INDEX NUMBER: 135.89	CHANGE: -0.40%
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	28000	82726	2.950	2.960
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	227	658	3.000	2.920
THE ARAB POTASH	620	3408	5.500	5.500
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	1220	11979	9.800	9.850
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	454	1970	4.350	4.350
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCK MILLS	3483	28026	8.050	8.030
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	7172	41234	5.750	5.700
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	800	2240	2.770	2.800
ARAB INDUSTRIES	2000	5671	2.860	2.840
JORDAN ALUMINUM DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	22887	388895	16.800	16.800
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	50200	54079	1.070	1.090
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	1600	11865	7.500	7.450
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	37850	36541	980	970
JORDAN PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	5200	7587	1.470	1.460
JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	250	1215	5.120	4.950
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JMCO	2650	2263	860	860
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	550	2944	5.380	5.380
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	230	700	2.800	2.800
KAMHER INVESTMENT	850	1558	1.820	1.820
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	650	2763	4.260	4.260
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	29406	65518	2.310	2.250
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	196425	753827	INDEX NUMBER: 131.03	CHANGE: -0.48%
GRAND TOTAL	323900	1547380	INDEX NUMBER: 145.82	CHANGE: -0.23%

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Ipswich and Leeds upset in F.A. Cup

LONDON (R) — Veteran defender Gary Bennett slotted home a penalty four minutes from time as second division Wrexham shocked Premier League strugglers Ipswich 2-1 in the F.A. Cup Saturday.

The tiny Welsh club who humbled Arsenal in the third round three years ago were giant killers on a day when the aspirations of four Minor League sides foundered on the rock solid defences of their rivals in the English soccer elite.

Leeds United defender David Wetherall denied third division Walsall a major scalp by scoring a 1-1 draw.

Wolverhampton Wanderers, four times winners and gunning for promotion from the first division, came from 2-0 down at third division Mansfield to win 3-2, scoring three goals in 19 minutes.

Minor League Aylesbury were crushed 4-0 by Queen's Park Rangers in a home game rescheduled to their rivals' West London ground, while Altrincham fell 3-0 to eighth time F.A. Cup winners Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane.

Marlow and Enfield, two more Minor League sides who played away, both lost 2-0 to first division Swindon and Premier League Leicester respectively.

Second division leaders Birmingham, unbeaten in 21 games, held second favourites Liverpool, winners in 1989 and 1992, 0-0, while first division Millwall also held Arsenal 0-0.

Sheffield Wednesday survived the sending off of their goalkeeper Kevin Pressman just before half time to win 2-1 at third division Gillingham after former Tottenham, Marseille and England winger Chris Waddle had opened their account.

Two players were also sent off in Norwich City's 1-0 win away to first division Grimsby, while visiting Stoke fans invaded the pitch and clashed with stewards and police at halftime in the goalless draw in the all first division game at Bristol City.

Manchester United, favourites to retain the F.A. Cup and gunning for a second successive double including the league title, are away to

first division Sheffield United Monday.

Ipswich defender David Linighan had equalised with a penalty only two minutes before Wrexham's winner and they hit the woodwork twice in injury time. Wrexham went ahead through Kieron Durkin in the 59th minute.

Waddle and Mark Bright scored within two minutes just after the half hour to give Wednesday a comfortable lead. Pressman pulled Gillingham's Chris Pike down three minutes from half time and was shown the red card. Pike then beat reserve 'keeper Lance key from the spot.

Grimsby's Graham Rodger was sent off after only 15 minutes for a body check on Norwich's Darren Eadie.

Norwich finally broke the Grimsby defence down for Ian Crook to score in the 56th minute. Their defender Robert Ullathorne was dismissed for a second bookable offence one minute from time.

In-form QPR went three up against Aylesbury in the first half with goals from Danny Maddin, Les Ferdinand and Kevin Gallen. Michael Meaker added a fourth 12 minutes from time.

Tottenham, unbeaten in 10 games and with a clean sheet in six, scored through England striker Teddy Sheringham, Israel's Ronny Rosenzweig and defender Stuart Nethercott.

Swindon's goals, both after the break, came from foreign duo Jan Fjortoft of Norway and Dutchman Lue Nijholt.

Leicester's victory, with goals from David Oldfield and Iwan Roberts, their third in five games, helped them forget their woes in the premier division, where they are bottom.

Liverpool, in manager Roy Evans' first F.A. Cup tie in charge, will be glad to have survived a bruising clash at Birmingham in their 0-0 draw.

But they will be aware that in the previous two seasons they went out in replays at this stage to teams from the next division down.

The replay at Anfield is on January 18 with Liverpool's veteran striker Ian Rush still a goal short of former Manchester United great Denis Law's F.A. Cup record of 41.

Cup romance lives on in a Tottenham shirt

LONDON (R) — The English F.A. Cup is not only the oldest knockout competition in world soccer but, as every fan knows, the one which regularly produces upset results and heroic achievement better suited to tales of romantic fiction.

Giant-killing acts from years gone by are part of the fabric of English soccer and famous upsets like Walsall's victory over Arsenal in 1933, Yeovil's win over Sunderland (1948) or Sutton's success against Coventry (1989) are regularly shown on television as part of the build-up to the third round when the surviving minnows from the qualifying rounds come face to face with the big guns.

The build-up to this weekend's third round matches was no exception, but TV producers of the future will give the third round of 1995 a miss when looking for archive material.

All four non-league sides were comprehensively beaten and failed to score. Marlow went down 2-0 at Swindon. Enfield were beaten 2-0 at Leicester. Aylesbury lost 4-0 at Queens Park Rangers, and although Altrincham lost 3-0 at Tottenham the magic of the Cup lived on after the match.

Altrincham's visit to White Hart Lane was always going to be one of the most intriguing ties simply because it looked as though it would never take place.

Last summer Tottenham were expelled from the Cup as part of their punishment for financial irregularities and were only re-instated after the draw for the third round was made.

If Tottenham had not been allowed back in, Altrincham would have received a bye into the fourth round, but even though his side lost, manager John King was delighted the tie went ahead.

"I'm disappointed we lost, but we did not disgrace ourselves and this match is a highlight in the history of Altrincham Football Club. I would much rather have played and lost than not played it and got a bye into the next round."

"Look what my players have gained today. They have played against world class players like Juergen Klinsmann and not been disgraced. They'll remember it for ever."

Altrincham striker Andy Green said: "This was our big day, our Cup final. We may have lost but there were 25,000 people there watching us. On Wednesday it's the Cheshire senior cup in front of 200 people and with two floodlights up half the pitch."

"We didn't win today, but the magic of the Cup was that we are here."

Coincidentally, Tottenham and Altrincham, who come from different galaxies as far as the football universe is concerned, have met in the competition before.

Sixteen years ago this week, their paths crossed with Altrincham holding Spurs to a 1-1 draw at White Hart Lane before Spurs won the replay 3-0 at Manchester City's ground.

But once Altrincham fell behind there was no way back. Substitute Shaun Constable did get the ball in the Tottenham net after 72 minutes but it was disallowed for an infringement and Tottenham sewed up the match when defender Stuart Nethercott scored his first ever goal for the club nine minutes from time.

While Altrincham will have to wait at least a year to add another name to the 16 victories they have recorded against league sides in the past, Tottenham have moved a small step along the way to the final itself, which they have won eight times, a record they share with Manchester United.

They have now gone 10 matches without losing and six matches without conceding a goal since Gary Francis took over as manager in November and a season which went so badly wrong under former Manager Ossie Ardiles could yet end with Tottenham winning a trophy.

NHL owners reject offer

NEW YORK (AFP) — National Hockey League (NHL) owners rejected a final offer from players Saturday, but made their own "take it or leave it" pitch to the union rather than cancel a season now delayed for 100 days.

"A lot of the proposal they presented to us was satisfactory," Pittsburgh Penguins' general manager Howard Baldwin said. "A few points need adjusting. If the players are willing, we will have a season. If not we won't."

Owners set a deadline of Tuesday to respond to their counter-proposal or risk having the league become the first U.S. sport ever to cancel an entire season over a labor dispute.

Saturday's move was a way for owners to blame a wipeout of the entire season on the players, even though owners have locked them out since October 1 in hopes of imposing a salary cap.

Players had offered to play during talks, arousing the ire of fans at the owners. Now with time running out before a January 16 deadline for starting the season, owners want more concessions from the union.

"It is their decision. They are still big boys," Baldwin said.

Many players had objected to the pact owners rejected, saying it gave away too much.

"We have given them our best offer," Quebec player Joe Sakic said before the owners met. "If they reject it, the season is cancelled."

Players have been training on their own and said they would not need many workouts before beginning play. But they were less willing to budge on key issues such as a proposed tax system many regard as salary limiting.

"The union feels it has bent over backwards," Anaheim Mighty Ducks player Bob Corkrum said.

Owners were not unified behind the proposal they sent back to the union Saturday either.

"I'm not sure if we can live with it or not," San Jose owner George Gund said. "We certainly can't live with anything less."

League commissioner Gary Bettman said owners voted 19-7 to reject the players' offer and cancel the season Tuesday if no deal is reached.



Milwaukee Bucks forward Vin Baker dunks over Utah Jazz centre Felton Spencer (AFP photo)

Barkley paces Suns past Nuggets

DENVER (R) — Charles Barkley scored 22 points and Danny Manning had six of his 20 in an 18-7 fourth-quarter run as the streaking Phoenix Suns defeated the Denver Nuggets, 109-100 Saturday.

Rookie Wesley Person added 15 points for Phoenix, which improved to a Western Conference-best 24-7.

The Suns have won 12 of their last 14 games.

Bryant Stith scored 18 points and Reggie Williams had 17 for the Nuggets, who have lost nine of their last 14 games.

In Washington, Rod Strickland scored a season-high 31 points and had 11 assists as the Portland Trail Blazers defeated the Washington Bullets, 114-105.

Clifford Robinson added 24 and Clyde Drexler had 18 for Portland, which wrapped up its five-game road trip 3-2.

"We were really moving the ball well and we took advantage of their double teams," Robinson said. "We played well tonight."

Calbert Cheaney scored 22 points and Mitchell Butler netted 19 off the bench to pace Washington, which fell to 7-23. The Bullets have lost 15 of their last 16 games.

In Cleveland, Terrell Brandon, starting in place of the injured Mark Price, scored a career-high 24 points to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 92-78 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

Price, the Cavaliers' leading scorer, missed the game with a sprained right foot.

Bobby Phillips scored 21 points and John Williams added 19 for the Cavs, who won for the 12th time in their last 14 games.

The Bulls jumped out to a 15-9 lead before Cleveland ran off 10 straight points to take the lead for good.

"It is my job as a backup to just come in and do the best I can and try to give everyone the ball," said Brandon.

In Atlanta, Ken Norman scored 22 points and Tyrone Corbin had six of his 16 during a 14-2 fourth-quarter run as the Atlanta Hawks beat

the visiting New Jersey Nets, 102-85.

Atlanta held a 68-65 advantage with 10:38 left in the fourth before the game-breaking run.

The Nets, who have lost seven of their last eight games, were led by Derrick Coleman's 16 points and 11 rebounds. They shot a miserable 36 per cent from the field.

In Charlotte, Alonzo Mourning scored 33 points and grabbed 13 rebounds and Larry Johnson scored six of his 23 points during a key 10-2 fourth-quarter run, leading the streaking Charlotte Hornets to a come-from-behind 106-98 victory over Boston Celtics.

Muggsy Bogues chipped in with 20 points for the Hornets.

Dominique Wilkins scored 24 points and Pervis Ellison had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Celtics, who lost their sixth of eight games.

In Utah, Jeff Hornacek scored 21 points, Karl Malone had 20 and Antoine Carr added 19 as the Utah Jazz routed the Philadelphia 76ers, 111-90.

The Jazz, who have won 10 of their last 12 games, used a 35-10 run from the outset of the second half to take a commanding 80-57 advantage.

Malone credited his team's defence. "As a whole, everybody stepped up and got in going on the defensive end and when we did that it seemed like the easy shots were coming."

In Houston, Reggie Miller scored 23 points, including a

key three-point play with 35 seconds left in the game, to lift the Indiana Pacers to an 88-83 win over the Houston Rockets, giving coach Larry Brown his 500th NBA victory.

Derrick McKey added 16 points for the Pacers, who snapped a three-game road losing streak.

Hakeem Olajuwon led the Rockets with 27 points and 16 rebounds, but missed several big shots down the stretch. The loss snapped Houston's six-game winning streak.

"I'm very disappointed with the way we took the floor on these guys," said Houston head coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "I told them they'd be playing with a lot of fire tonight. I don't understand why they had fire and we didn't."

In Los Angeles, David Robinson scored 27 points and Chuck Person had 18 of his 20 in the fourth quarter, including four three-pointers, as the San Antonio Spurs cruised past the Los Angeles Clippers 103-88.

Sean Elliott added 21 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed a season-high 22 rebounds as the Spurs won their 11th of their last 12 games.

In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond hit two free throws with 1.7 seconds remaining to lift the Sacramento Kings to a 96-95 victory over the Miami Heat.

Richmond and Walt Williams scored 27 points apiece for the Kings, who have won four of their last five games.

Glen Rice scored 23 points and Kevin Willis added 22 points and nine rebounds for Miami.

RESULTS

Atlanta	102	New Jersey	85
Charlotte	106	Boston	98
Cleveland	92	Chicago	78
Portland	114	Washington	105
Indiana	88	Houston	83
Phoenix	109	Denver	100
Utah	111	Philadelphia	90
San Antonio	103	LA Clippers	88
Sacramento	96	Miami	95

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NORTH
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♥ J 4 3
♦ A K J 10
♣ A K 6 3

WEST
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♥ Void
♦ Q 8 4
♣ Q 10 7 2

EAST
♠ 7 6 5 4 3 2
♥ Q 10 8
♦ 9 7 5 3
♣ J 8 5

SOUTH
♠ 8 5
♥ A K 9 7 4 5 2
♦ 2
♣ 9 4

The bidding:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
3 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass
4 ♠ Pass 5 ♠ Pass
6 ♠ Pass 6 ♠ Pass

Opening 2nd Aue of ♣

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury."

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"The facts are straightforward enough. At both tables South became declarer at six hearts. The auction shown is at the table where the crime occurred. South judged well to raise over game, denying any side-suit control to cue-bid and by inference confirming good hearts. North had an easy raise to slam."

"At both tables West led the ace of spades and continued the suit. At the other table declarer won the second spade, led a heart to the king

and was forced to concede a trump trick and defeat when West showed out."

"At the relevant table, the play in the first two tricks was the same, but at the third trick declarer led the jack of hearts. East 'covered an honor with an honor' and, when West discarded a spade, declarer simply crossed back to dummy and took the marked finesse for the ten of hearts to land the slam. Need we say more?"

"The Court congratulates South on the fine play of the jack of hearts at trick three. Nevertheless, we find East guilty as charged. Since East was looking at the ten of hearts, it should have been obvious that declarer was not attempting a finesse. East should simply have followed with the lowest heart and here, too, the slam would have failed."

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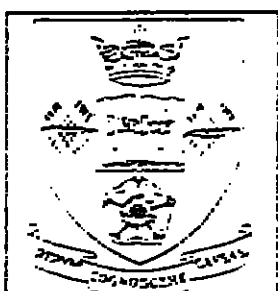
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Raghdha & Farooq Al Fishawi in RAGHBAT		Julia Roberts/Nick Nolte in I Love Trouble		CONCORD '1' Sylvester Stallone/ Sharon Stone		will soon present: Mousa Hijazin (SUM'AA)	Presents Abu Awwad in the social comedy Punctured Bag	Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam
Shows: 12.30, 3.30, 6.15, 8.30, 10.30		Shows: 6.30, 8.30, 10.30		Shows: 12.30, 2.30, 4.15, 6.15, 8.15, 10.30		in the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen	The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Daily at 8.30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. in English Sunday January 15, 1995
		The Lion King		CONCORD '2' SLEEP WALKER				
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Barkley gets 1st title

FOR the number one Jim... over boom-... man Richard... in the Austr... championship... to and a 16... the first title... for his first title... the first title... in August.

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While he w... pletely happy... Courner said... approach was j... practice on Me... rebound ass... idea preparation... stration Open... in two weeks.

"I didn't play... nis and the enco... about that is wi... a way to win... "I had a lot o... was down brea... just stuck with... had confidence... Boersch said... the confidence... him to the fir... ced Courner's... too much for

who should new... in the world... and he never felt... a win. But added... never hurts, that's... was never a time... I would ever... it's always nice... and finally do it... looking forward to... the year."

Year-old American... from the French and... Opens twice... tennis last year... time on the... received a wild-... the main draw in... and did not relin-... was on his way to... final.

looked in trouble... French-... 53rd in the

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Nigerian Angustine Eguavoen (left) goes for the ball against Japanese Masami Ihara during the Intercontinental Cup. Nigeria won 3-0 (AFP photo)

Courier gets 1st title in 16 months

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Former world number one Jim Courier beat Arnaud Boetsch of France in the Australian hardcourt championship final Sunday to end a 16-month title drought.

Courier took 90 minutes to beat the unseeded Frenchman 6-2, 7-5 for his first title since he defeated Boris Becker at Indianapolis in August, 1993.

Courier, who should now rise from 13 to 11 in the world rankings, said he never felt pressure to win. But added: "Winning never hurts, that's for sure."

"There was never a time when I doubted I would ever win again but it's always nice to go ahead and finally do it, and I'm looking forward to the rest of the year."

The 24-year-old American, who has won the French and Australian Opens twice, briefly quit tennis last year after a torrid time on the circuit. He received a wildcard into the main draw in Adelaide and did not relinquish a set on his way to Sunday's final.

He rarely looked in trouble against the tenacious Frenchman, ranked 53rd in the

world, who reached the final with a brilliant semi-final win over boom-servicing Dutchman Richard Krajicek.

Courier shot to an early 3-0 lead and went on to win the first set comfortably, despite six of the first seven games being forced to deuce.

After both players broke serve in the opening games of the second set, the match went with Courier broke in the 12th and final game to become the first American since Mike Bauer in 1983 to win the Adelaide title.

While he was not completely happy with his form, Courier said his mental approach was good and the practice on Memorial Drive's rebound ace courts was an idea preparation for the Australian Open in Melbourne in two weeks.

"I didn't play my best tennis and the encouraging thing about that is that I still found a way to win," he said. "I had a lot of times when I was down break points and I just stuck with my game and had confidence in myself."

Boetsch said he lost a lot of the confidence which helped him to the final, and conceded Courier's power was too much for him.

"I lost a bit of confidence in my groundstrokes, especially my forehand," the Frenchman said.

"I don't know why, but I didn't feel very comfortable at the back of the court. He was hitting the ball very hard, harder than the other players."

He said Courier could still improve and be back at the top of world tennis, where he spent most of 1992 before burn-out at the end of 1993 and 1994 initiated a decline in his ranking to 13.

"He's missing some shots. Maybe he needs some more matches. This tournament will be good for his confidence because he's hitting the ball very hard," Boetsch said.

Courier, who collected \$43,000, said he still had the belief to get back to the top. "When I'm playing well and have a good spirit my game matches up with almost everyone so it's just a question of being patient with myself rather than forcing it to happen," Courier said.

Courier will stay in Adelaide to play the exhibition international challenge starting Wednesday.

His first match is against U.S. Open champion Andre Agassi.

49ers, Steelers reach NFL semi-finals

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — San Francisco and Pittsburgh won tidesided National Football League playoff victories Saturday, earning home field advantage for the games that decide who plays in the Super Bowl.

William Floyd ran for three touchdowns and Steve Young scored two more to spark the 49ers past visiting Chicago 44-15 while host Pittsburgh ripped Cleveland 29-9 in the first playoff meeting of their 45-year rivalry.

On January 15, the 49ers will host the winner of Sunday's Dallas-Green Bay while the Steelers host the winner of Sunday's Miami-San Diego game for the other berth in the January 29 title game at Miami.

Chicago went ahead of the 49ers on Kevin Butler's 39-yard field goal 3:58 into their game, but nothing else went right for the Bears. The 49ers rolled ahead 30-3 at half-time to seal Chicago's fate.

"We put some points on the board early and coasted in," Young said. "Our defence shut them down and everybody played well."

Young picked apart Chicago's defence, completing 16 of 22 passes for 143 yards before reserves took over midway into the third quarter. Young threw a seven-yard touchdown pass to Brent Jones and rushed six yards for another.

Chicago's Shaun Gayle slammed Young to the turf after his rushing score,

sparking a brief scuffle. Young said the hit was just part of the game.

"I have no problem with it," Young said. "It was a good hit. He was a good hit. He was trying his hardest to win."

Floyd scored on runs of one, two and four yards. Adam Walker also found the end zone on a one-yard dive.

Doug Brien, who missed a conversion kick, added a 36-yard field goal after a Merton Hanks interception and drive-sustaining 18-yard catch from Jerry Rice.

Chicago found the end zone in the fourth quarter on a two-yard touchdown toss from Erik Kramer to Jim Flanagan, a defensive lineman used as a receiver. Pittsburgh beat Cleveland for the third time this season behind 133 yards rushing from Barry Foster and the throwing of Neil O'Donnell, whose 186 passing yards included a nine-yard touchdown toss to Yancey Thigpen and a two-yard scoring connection with Eric Green.

"It's indescribable. The team and the whole city are excited," said Pittsburgh defender Darren Perry, who picked off Cleveland's Vinny Testaverde for the fourth time this season.

"We disguised our coverages really well," Perry said. "They did a lot of talking. There comes a time when you must put up or shut up. We kept our mouths shut and did our talking on the field."

tion 38 seconds before half-time set up Thigpen's touchdown, giving the Steelers a 24-3 lead at the break.

"We established our rushing early and kept moving the ball," Thigpen said. "When we get into that rhythm, it's hard to slow us up."

Keith McCardell caught a 41-yard touchdown pass for the Browns in the fourth quarter, but it was too little and too late. The Steelers' defence, which led the NFL with 55 sacks, ended the scoring by tackling Testaverde in the end zone for a two-point safety.

"They played more physically than we did," Cleveland's Eric Turner said. "They were at a championship level."

Zamorano grabs 3 as Real crush Barcelona

MADRID (Agencies) — Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano grabbed a first half hat-trick as league leaders Real Madrid crushed champion Barcelona 5-0 in Spain's clash of the giants in the Bernabeu Stadium Saturday.

Barcelona played the second half with 10 men after Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov, last year's European Footballer of the Year, was sent off on the stroke of half-time for stamping on the knee of Madrid fullback Quique Sanchez Flores.

Stoichkov's gesture of frustration, after 45 minutes isolated in an unsupported centre-forward position, summed up Barcelona's feelings in a match in which the champions barely managed a shot on goal.

Madrid's fourth and fifth goals came within a minute of each other in the 69th and 70th minutes with Luis Enrique Martinez and Jose Ananias supplying the final touches.

The victory consolidated Madrid's position at the top of the table with 25 points from 16 games. Barcelona are now five points adrift.

The win was perfect revenge for an equally humiliating 3-0 defeat inflicted by Barcelona Madrid in Camp Nou Stadium almost exactly a year ago.

A sell-out 107,000 crowd delighted in the opportunity of the razor-sharp Zamorano, who now leads the league's scorers with 17

goals, and the midfield mastery of Danish international Michael Laudrup, who repeatedly left the Barcelona defence in confusion with his elegant dribbling and precision passing.

Loko scores hat-trick

In Paris, Nantes striker Patrice Loko hit a first-half hat-trick against Lille Saturday as the French league returned from its winter break.

Nantes' 3-0 victory puts them seven points ahead of Paris Saint Germain. And Loko has shot further ahead in the French goal scoring list with 15.

The north western club had also not scored or won at home since beating Metz 3-1 on November 5 — if you disregard their 4-0 UEFA Cup win over Switzerland's Sion.

Claude Makelele set up Loko for his 17th minute opener, but it was a bad back pass by Dane Jacob Friis-Hansen in the 34th minute which put Loko in for his second. The third, four minutes before the break, came following good work from Japhet N'Doram and Reynald Pedros.

Meanwhile, Paris-Saint Germain's match at Sochaux was called off on Friday due



Nantes striker Patrice Loko (left) is tackled by a defender (AFP photo)

to heavy snowfalls and has been rescheduled for February 1.

But PSG coach Luis-Fernandez decided to arrange a friendly against third division

side Creteil to keep their eye in for Wednesday's crunch Parc des Princes battle against Nantes.

A 25-yard shot from Johan Micoud and a second from

Pascal Bedrossian in injury time brought hosts Cannes a 2-0 win over nine-man Nice in their Riviera derby. Cannes moved up from fourth to third spot.

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Sameh Madani
Managing Director

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Arafat, Peres meet today

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres are to meet Monday in a new bid to overcome the deadlock in extending Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank, officials said Sunday.

Talks between the two sides have dragged as relations worsened amid a series of anti-Israeli attacks by Palestinian hardliners and a crisis over the expansion of Jewish settlements.

Last week, the army shot dead three Palestinian policemen.

Mr. Peres urged the Israeli government on Sunday not to give up the peace process despite setbacks in opinion polls. "The government must not take account of the fluctuations in public opinion," he said.

Chief PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath said the two men, due to meet at the Erez crossing point into the self-rule Gaza Strip, would mainly discuss an Israeli army pullout from Palestinian towns on the occupied West Bank.

Israel has stalled on the redeployment issue saying it fears the move would leave the 120,000 settlers in the West Bank vulnerable to attack, and has been trying to limit as much as possible any eventual pullout.

But the Palestinians have said it would be impossible to hold elections if the army is still in place.

Forty-six Israelis have died since self-rule was launched in May.

Jewish settlements and the release of 6,000 Palestinian prisoners would also figure on the agenda.

The Israeli government decided Sunday to set up a commission to study criteria for releasing more prisoners, an official said.

The joint Israeli-Palestinian committee to organise elections to a self-rule council is also due to meet Monday in Cairo, Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim, the head of Mr. Arafat's office, said.

He said the two sides were "close to an accord" on how to hold the elections and on the powers and composition of the council, in a statement published in Gaza.

The Israeli delegation to the Cairo talks will be led by Gadi Zohar, head of the military administration in the West Bank. His Palestinian counterpart will be Saeb Erakat. Both delegations will have five members.

Mr. Arafat is also due to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin although no date has been set.

Nearly 300 Palestinians held three separate demonstrations on the occupied West Bank Sunday against the expansion of Jewish settlements.

And the government discussed the issue without taking any fresh decisions.

Palestinian officials said around 100 villagers from Husan near Bethlehem prevented bulldozers opening up a new road linking the nearby settlement of Betar with the Gush Etzion settlement block.

In the same region 100 villagers from Al Khader and Artas demonstrated against the expansion of the Ephraim settlement.

Dozens more villagers from Al Janah near Ramallah further north demonstrated against the expansion of the Talmun settlement, which they said was spreading over their land.

Amid pressure from the Palestinians and leftwing Israelis, the government a week ago halted work on 500 settlers' homes in Ephrat, but moved the work to another site closer to the settlement allowing construction to start on 260 homes.

The government Sunday discussed the further expansion of settlements without taking any new decisions, officials said.

It will hear a detailed report on the issue from the housing minister in a week's time.

Israeli military authorities announced Sunday that 50,000 Palestinian workers

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His Majesty King Hussein, members of the Royal family and outgoing prime minister Abdullah Majali and

senior Royal Court officials at Sunday's swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet (Petra photo)

Women hail presence of Khalaf and Damen-Masri in Council of Ministers

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The appointment for the first time of two women ministers in the newly-formed Cabinet was highly welcomed by women activists in the Kingdom who also hoped the step would be followed by other serious measures to achieve women's rights.

"It is a very positive step," said Emile Naffa, a woman activist. "But there is still a long path to go."

The appointment of Salwa Damen-Masri as minister of social development and the reappointment of Rima Khalaf to the cabinet were seen generally as a historic event that has to be consolidated by moves from within the women's movement as well as without.

"There has to be a drastic change in society's perceptions of women," said Suhair Tel, a writer and a woman activist. "Decisions to appoint women to senior posts have, for the most part, come from the top. Women have to start making it as a result of a process."

Inam Mufti, who is now serving as advisor to Queen Noor for planning and development, was appointed as the first woman minister in 1979. Although no women were designated to senior posts in the different government institutions in the period between 1987-1993, there are now, other than the two women ministers, two senators (Laila Sharaf and



Rima Khalaf

Na'ela Rashdan) and one deputy (Toujan Faisal). But women activists believe it will not be as easy to change the society's view of women overnight.

"There is a lot of doubt that more women would be elected to the Lower House of Parliament in the future," said Ms. Tel. "There are still certain insecurities towards the role of the woman in society and occupation by females of decision-making posts."

The activists said there should be no discrimination against women. A person should be chosen according to his/her qualifications regardless of gender, they said, pointing out successes achieved by women under difficult odds.

"Toujan Faisal and Rima Khalaf might have been criticised at the beginning on the presumption that they are not qualified (to be where they are)," said



Salwa Damen-Masri

Asma Khader, a lawyer and president of the Women's Union in Jordan. "They've proven to be more qualified and responsible than what many had thought."

Ms. Khader said the presence of two women ministers should strengthen hopes of a better future for women.

"Qualified women will have more confidence now that more women are appointed to senior positions," she said. "The success of these women has also its reflections on the society's view towards women."

Women activists hailed this step as complementary to several other steps that have been taken in recent years, mainly including women in municipal councils and recommending them to diplomatic missions and conferences.

"There has been a series

of steps that indicate we're on the right track vis-a-vis women's development and improvement of their status in the society," Ms. Naffa said. "Appointing women by decree may not be bad after all."

Ms. Naffa said that there should also be quotas for women in Parliament, in municipal councils and everywhere.

"If there was not a quota for women in the Pakistani parliament, for instance, it would have been impossible for a woman to become prime minister there," Ms. Naffa said.

Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, president of the General Union of Women in Jordan, said the appointment of two women is a sizeable gain for the country as a whole.

"We hail Sharif Zeid's move," Ms. Abu Ghazaleh said. "It is not only a gain for women but also for all the country."

Ms. Damen-Masri, the first-time minister, told the Jordan Times yesterday that she was optimistic herself of the confidence the Jordanian leadership has placed in women.

Although she does not have specific plans for women's development at present, she hoped she'll be able to contribute to women's development and progress in the country.

"Anyone should be selected according to his/her qualification whether this person is a man or a woman," Ms. Damen-Masri, a mother of three children, stressed.

Perry, Rabin discuss peace, nuclear issues

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met on Sunday for talks expected to cover the Middle East peace process and the danger of nuclear proliferation in the region.

Reports that Israel helped China develop a warplane with U.S. military technology were also likely to be discussed.

Mr. Perry arrived for a two-day visit in Israel from Egypt, meeting the two largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid, at about \$3 billion and \$2 billion respectively each year.

A U.S. defence official said Mr. Perry planned to discuss in general terms an expected U.S. agreement to station troops on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria as part of a future peace deal.

Neither Mr. Perry nor Mr. Rabin, who also holds the defence portfolio, made any comment to reporters after the two-hour meeting in Tel Aviv.

Before leaving for Islamabad on Monday, Mr. Perry was scheduled to fly over the Golan Heights.

Syria wants Israel to pledge to return all of the Golan before discussing normalisation and security arrangements with the Jewish state.

One of the arrangements mentioned includes putting U.S. troops in a demilitarised border area evacuated by Israel.

Jewish Golan settlers asked on Sunday for a meeting with Mr. Perry, and members of the opposition said most Israelis opposed a with-

drawal from the Heights. "It's important that Mr. Perry know when he speaks to this government that wants to give the Golan Heights to Syria, he is speaking to a minority government," said Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the opposition Likud Party.

Mr. Perry said in Cairo he would urge Israel to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He made the same plea to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"One of the most (dangerous) security threats facing the world this decade is the danger that a rogue nation or terrorists will get their hands on one, five or a dozen nuclear weapons and threaten the world with them," Mr. Perry said in Cairo.

He was apparently referring to recent media reports that Iran was close to being able to build nuclear weapons, a charge Tehran denied on Saturday.

The reports, along with news of an Iranian deal with Russia to complete construction of a nuclear power plant on the Gulf coast (see page 2), have prompted speculation of a possible Iranian preemptive strike against Israel.

Iran on Sunday warned of an Israeli "atomic threat," and urged Middle Eastern countries to pressure the Jewish state into destroying its nuclear arsenal, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

"We demand all the countries of the region to take Israel's atomic threat seriously and guide their diplomacy in the direction of pressuring

Jordan brings back tough finance minister

AMMAN (R) — Basel Jaradneh, a banker who helped restructure Jordan's debt-ridden economy after 1989 riots, returned as finance minister in a government formed on Sunday by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir.

Mr. Jaradneh was credited with skillful rescheduling of Jordan's crushing foreign debt in talks with the 14-member Paris Club of official

creditors.

Sharif Zeid first called on Mr. Jaradneh when he became prime minister in 1989 after unrest over International Monetary Fund (IMF)-directed economic reforms.

Mr. Jaradneh held the post more than four years, staying under Prime Minister Mudar Badran through the 1990 Gulf crisis and in Sharif

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Foreign minister is a U.S.-educated liberal

AMMAN (R) — Abdul Karim Al Kabarti, sworn in as Jordan's foreign minister in a new cabinet on Sunday, is a U.S.-educated liberal with close links to King Hussein.

Mr. Kabarti, 45, from a leading Jordanian political and business family, also has strong links with Syria, the key Arab neighbour with whom Jordan has to improve ties.

Syrian relations with Amman, traditionally uneasy, were strained when Amman moved quickly last year to make peace with Israel.

As chairman of the Lower House of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Kabarti helped pass the Oct. 25 peace treaty with Israel.

He is respected by many non-traditional Jordanians but has often clashed with Muslim fundamentalists, a key force in Parliament.

He won acclaim in 1992, when as labour minister, he hosted a meeting of the Arab Labour Organisation, attract-

Iraq hopes to isolate U.S. on sanctions

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — France's decision to receive an Iraqi leader in Paris and establish a diplomatic foothold in Baghdad has given the Iraqi government hope that U.N. trade sanctions may be eased soon, diplomats said.

"It was indeed a timely step for Iraq. No one here imagined it would happen in this way," a Western diplomat told Reuters at the weekend.

News on Friday of France's decision to reestablish a diplomatic interests section at the Romanian embassy in Baghdad was gleefully received in Iraq.

State-run newspapers heaped praise on France, saying the decision propelled into the international limelight Iraq's case for easing or lifting the U.N. sanctions imposed after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

"After France's decision... Iraq's case is now of international proportions," said the government newspaper Al Jumhuriya.

Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz visited France on Friday and had a long meeting with French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, the first time since the 1991 Gulf war that an Iraqi government member had been officially received in Paris.

Diplomats in Baghdad said France's decision was the culmination of discreet contacts, and French officials and businessmen have been much in evidence in Baghdad in recent years.

French companies have tentatively reached lucrative oil and other industrial deals with Iraqi ministries. Al Jumhuriya said France was mainly motivated by economic interests.

"The positive step by France to open an interests section in Baghdad surprised no one as it was natural and expected... (economic) interests are one of its two main pillars," the paper said.

Iraq's official media took

France's step as proof that the Western allies, particularly Washington, had also failed to contain Iraq by insisting on keeping the sanctions intact.

"The international community is witnessing Iraq's comeback," said Al Jumhuriya.

Diplomats said that in its legal interpretation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, under which Iraq would be allowed to export oil again once it met all demands involving weapons of mass destruction, Baghdad now had three permanent members in the council on its side — France, Russia and China.

Kuwait meanwhile played down France's decision to open an interests section in Baghdad and said the move will not harm relations with Paris.

"We must not give this matter the extreme importance it does not deserve in as much as we remember that Paris is so far holding to the international legitimacy resolutions," Kuwait's news agency (KUNA) quoted Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah as saying.

United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali offered on Saturday to resume talks with Iraq on a partial lifting of the sanctions.

Dr. Ghali said he was prepared to resume the talks which were suspended after Baghdad turned down earlier proposals.

"I officially make today the same proposal," he told France 3 television. "I am prepared to start again negotiations towards a partial lifting of the embargo."

Dr. Ghali said he had discussed with Iraqi leaders a partial lifting of the embargo.

"We had long talks, then they changed their mind at the last minute," he said, without specifying which

(Continued on page 3)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rabbi forbids selling homes to Arabs

TEL AVIV (R) — A Jewish Rabbi in Safed said on Sunday he had issued a religious ruling forbidding residents of the city from selling or renting homes to Arabs. "I issued the ruling last week in response to questions posed by several residents of the city," Safed's chief rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu told Reuters. "One reason is social. No one wants to live next to an Arab from (the Arab cities of) Nabulus or Gaza and what you don't wish upon yourself you should not force upon your friends for a fist full of dollars," he said. A city official said in response that the municipality has no special instructions for residents wishing to sell their homes and does not involve itself in such matters. A few thousand Arabs live in Safed, a city of 23,000 believed to be more than 2,000 years old. One of the four centres of ancient Jewish learning, the city had an Arab majority before the 1948 war.

Syria releases three political prisoners

AMMAN (AFP) — The Syrian authorities have released three political prisoners who were detained for more than 20 years, a Jordanian who was freed from jail in Damascus in 1993 said here Sunday. Mujalli Nassrawin told AFP he shared a cell for 10 years with Fawzi Reda, a former leader of the ruling Baath Party, who was freed Friday after 24 years in a Damascus prison. Mr. Reda's release was the result of "pressure on the Syrian authorities from international organisations," Mr. Nassrawin said. He said two other prisoners had been freed in Damascus — Mohammad Al Ashawi, a former foreign minister and interior minister jailed in 1970, and Abdul Hamid Mokdad, a member of the Baath Party leadership held since 1971. On Oct. 31, Syria released its last Jordanian political prisoner, Dhafi Jamaani, joining Mr. Nassrawin, Hassan Khatib, Yusef Burji and Hakem Fayez, who were all freed in 1993. The former detainees were all arrested during or after the November 1970 coup which brought the then defence minister, Hafez Al Assad, to power.

Hamas denies threatening Argentine mission

BEIRUT (R) — The militant group Hamas denied on Sunday that it had threatened to attack the Argentine embassy in Paraguay and said its struggle against Israel was restricted to occupied Palestine. Reuters reported from Buenos Aires on Friday that the independent Argentine news agency DYN quoted government sources as saying Hamas made the threat in a letter to the Argentine embassy in Asuncion. It gave no reason for the threat. A Hamas statement telefaxed to an international news agency in Beirut on Sunday said: "Hamas received with immense surprise the news that Reuters news agency issued about an alleged threat by Hamas to the Argentine embassy in Paraguay. Hamas assures that there is absolutely no truth to this news and repeats its assurances that its struggle is with the enemy and the place for this struggle is occupied Palestine." Sources in Argentina's intelligence secretariat confirmed the threat but tried to play down its significance, saying it was "nothing too serious," DYN said.

Qatari official arrives in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Qatari Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Ahmad Ben Abdullah Al Mahmoud arrived here on a several-day visit to Jordan for talks with Jordanian officials on cooperation. In an arrival statement, Mr. Mahmoud said his talks will focus on developing cooperation in the various fields and preparing an agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Qatari Committee which will meet in Doha. On his country's perception of future inter-Arab relations, the Qatari official voiced hope that inter-Arab relations will improve and develop to the best interest of both countries. Mr. Mahmoud stressed the importance of Arab solidarity "at this critical stage" and that time was important and valuable.



Taiwan woman MP convicted for slap

TAIPEI (R) — A Taiwanese district court has convicted an opposition National Assembly member for slapping a rival woman colleague during an Assembly session last year, local newspapers reported Sunday. The Shilin District Court sentenced Su Chi-Yang to three months in jail, with a two-year suspension, for inflicting public insult and hindering official business, the Liberty Times newspaper reported. Ms. Su, of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party, last June slapped Kuo Su-Chun, of the ruling Nationalist Party, whom she accused of insinuating that Ms. Su sat modestly. Ms. Kuo was making a speech when Ms. Su suddenly walked up to the podium and slapped Ms. Kuo in front of the whole Assembly. A brawl broke out in the Assembly immediately afterwards. With two other women members trading kicks and wrestling, "Su Chi-Yang was convicted of hindering official business for her behaviour of slapping Kuo Su-Chun, who was executing official business at that time," the United Daily News quoted the verdict as saying.

Crime down in New York City

NEW YORK (R) — New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said that the number of violent crimes in the city declined significantly last year. He hailed the decline as a success story for the city. The drop in murder and robbery was "the largest simultaneous decrease in these two categories in recent memory," the mayor said at a city hall news conference. He predicted it would have a substantial impact on tourism. Mr. Giuliani said last year's FBI crime statistics for large cities in America showed that New York was "first about the safest. Those numbers are getting better, not worse," he said. New York did not feature in the top 15 of the country's most dangerous cities with populations over 100,000. Atlanta, Miami and St. Louis, Missouri, were the three most dangerous. With Police Commissioner William Bratton at his side, the mayor also said that crime was down in every single precinct. "This is all very encouraging... and should make people feel confident," he said. The mayor said the decline in crime became more significant in the last four months of 1994, with homicides down by 35 per cent. A police department comparison chart showed 1,581 murders in New York last year, compared with 1,946 in 1993. Robbery went down from 85,883 in 1993 to 72,559 last year. "While our strategies clearly are having an impact, the level of crime in our city is still too high," the mayor said.

Einstein pipe, toy sell for \$20,000

PORTSMOUTH, New Hampshire (R) — The pipe Albert Einstein smoked and a game the Nobel Prize-winning physicist played as a child sold for \$20,000 at an auction. Auctioneer Jim Smith of Remember When Auctions of Portsmouth said he would not reveal the name of the buyer but said it was a private collector, not a museum or institution. Einstein died in 1953 and is most famous for his discovery of the theory of relativity. He was often pictured smoking the pipe, and after his death his daughter gave it to friend and photographer Stanford Roth. The game included 10 two-inch ivory pegs and a spinning top, authenticated by Christie's as a German 19th-century game Einstein played as a child. He was born in 1879 in Ulm, Germany, and probably played the game there. He published four papers in 1905 while at the Polytechnic Academy in Zurich, Switzerland, one of which contained the theory of relativity. It was verified in 1919 and he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1921. Einstein joined the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1933. The pipe was sold in its original leather case and was accompanied by a letter from Einstein's daughter, Margo, to Roth, saying, "Thanks to you for the happy times spent with us."